

Two Worlds Collide

by HawkTooth

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Summary: When our reality and Hiccup's world are connected through an impossible occurrence, and a young boy named Hawken is placed right in the middle, a vast realm of possibilities, dangers, and great adventures follow. But not everything is as it seems, and what appears to be nothing more than chance now may reverberate far into the future. Book 1 of the Two Worlds Collide Series.

## 1. Chapter 1: The Gateway Discovered

\*\*Hello!\*\*

\*\*This is my first time posting on fanfiction, though this story has been a work in progress for many years now. To sum up the point of view of the majority of this story, it is from my own, though there are portions that will be from the view of other characters in third-person in much later chapters. The first few chapters were written over 3 1/2 years ago, and so may seem somewhat young, but bear with me as the story does mature along the line. I am new here, so critics please go easy, and flames will be ignored.\*\*

\*\*This story involves ideas from a spiritual standpoint, and there are ideas/notions that are taken in spin-offs from stories I have read over the years, here and otherwise, though naturally everything has my own spin on it and a purpose for the later books. As the summary states, this is Book 1 of a 6-part series. Posts for the first two books will likely be made very regularly for a while, probably a chapter a week, but past that it will be whenever I manage to type them up. And, I am a terrible artist when it comes to people, but have wanted to see cover pictures for this story, so if anyone wants a challenge, feel free to try with this book.\*\*

\*\*Usual disclaimer: I own nothing, save a few original characters and myself.\*\*

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><p>Two Worlds Collide</p>

## Chapter One: The Gateway Discovered

Time and space are strange things, unable to truly be understood or controlled, except by God. That is why, looking back on that one day in summer, I am both surprised and not by what I discovered and was given to. The beginning of this story is rather humble, compared to what I would experience afterwards. I can definitely say, though, that I did not expect to find my favorite movie come to life on the other side of my discovery.

My uh, rather unorthodox adventure began with a hobby that most everyone who knows me can say I enjoy, at the very least. I was in my back yard, tending my garden, minding my own business for a good fifteen minutes or so. As I moved over to the far bed, I noticed something rather unusual out of the corner of my eye. I turned to get a better look, and saw that there seemed to be light shimmering on the rocks and fence about fifteen feet to my side, off in the rock bed at the back of my yard. The best description of how it looked would be to say it resembled sunlight reflecting off of a pool of water, but my family owns no pool, and there isn't a place for water to collect in my yard either. There wasn't even anything reflective in the yard anywhere, so I stood up to investigate this phenomenon. As I took a few steps forward, I realized that the source of the light was literally floating in front of my face! Above the rock bed, the air shimmered and glowed, as if there was something almost invisible there. As I walked toward it, then began to move past the spot, I found that the light and shimmering were concentrated in one simple spot in the air. I reached out toward it, but felt nothing. Thinking I wasn't close enough to touch whatever it was, I reached out further.

Then I noticed something: my hand was beginning to blur and shimmer, as if it was disappearing through or behind something. I yelled and jumped back, all the while staring at the shimmering air. I decided I wasn't going to explore this unarmed, so I turned and ran into the house. While in there, I grabbed my sword and whip, the few weapons that were easily available to me, plus I had a lot of practice with them. Not to brag, but I had been able to slice a small tree in half with my whip, let alone the sword. Now armed, I headed back out to the space/time paradox, and reached through again. I watched my hand shimmer, the blur, and begin to fade from view. Stepping forward into the anomaly, I noticed now that my entire back yard and everything visible from there began doing the same thing, but instead of fading from view, everything instead shifted and changed color, revealing a very different place. I was in a forest of sorts, surrounded by huge numbers of pine trees and other plants in rather lush undergrowth. Thankfully, all these plants I recognized as being Earth plants, though not exactly the habitat I found anywhere near my house. I turned, and seeing the shimmering light still behind me, decided it was safe to continue.

I had not taken ten steps before I reached the edge of an extremely large pit in the middle of the forest. I looked down, and noticed the cove (as I would later come to always call it) was rather familiar. Looking around, I realized I recognized the waterfall spilling over one edge into a lake that took up about half the space. The next realization was the tall tree to one end, near the fall. "It can't

be", I said, but one last glance confirmed it. On the other side of the cove were the very same rock ledges, small entrance, and boulders I had seen so often depicted in one certain movie. I nearly fainted on the spot. "Impossible! It's only a movie! This can't be happening. I have got to be dreaming!" To make sure I was dreaming, I pinched myself on the arm. "AAA-HOOOWWW! Oh, dear God, I really am here, aren't I?" Standing here, I had literally been transported to a place straight out of imagination, in a method right out of a child's wildest dreams. At this point, I'm sure you're as confused as I first was. To clear things up, I realized I just so happened to be standing on the ledge of the very well known cove in my most favorite movie of all time: none other than the bonding place of Hiccup and Toothless in the movie How to Train Your Dragon.

## 2. Chapter 2: Entrance to Imagination

\*\*Back again! The first few chapters will be out every day or every other day just to get things moving, then past that updates may be spanned out to once or twice a week. \*\*

\*\*Also, don't worry for those of you who want to see the characters we all love so much, they start showing up in the next chapter and will be here from there on out.\*\*

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><p>Two Worlds Collide</p>

### Chapter Two: Entrance to Imagination

I stood up above the cove for a good five to ten minutes, simply staring at the impossible scene before me. I was definitely glad that I hadn't run into Hiccup or one of the other Vikings right away, as I probably would have fainted on the spot. As they say, even too much of a good thing can hurt. After a little while, I finally came to terms that somehow, for reasons I would come to understand quite a while later, the "time-rip" behind me had connected my world of reality to a world of fictionality. Little did I know how much "fiction" could actually come to life here.

I turned to see that the rip was still there, and decided that, hey, what could a little exploring hurt? I worked my way around the edge of the cove until I found a way to climb down. At the bottom, no doubts were left that I was in a scene directly from How to Train Your Dragon: same waterfall, the pond taking up half the space, trees scattered here and there, and of course the scattered boulders all around me. As I was looking around, I failed to notice that I had lost a small, inexpensive cleaning cloth out of my pocket. I would later wake up to quite a shock because of it. After a while, though, even looking around the cove became a bit boring, and since I knew that there were a good many hours before my parents came home, I could spend a bit more time exploring. "I'll come back to look for the village later," I said.

After I climbed out of the cove, I made my way into the thick forest, keeping tabs on where I was headed and how to get back. It would be a rather bad thing to get lost around here, considering I knew that if the entire movie was real, there were many, uh, creatures that would be none too friendly if I crossed paths with them. Looking around, it

was a forest of very tall, old growth pine trees, and all around my feet were ferns and other small plants, making it rather hard to see anything down at ground level. As I entered a rather large clearing, I heard it. "Now this is a rather interesting turn of events." I spun around, looking for the source of the feminine voice. "He is not of this time, nor this world. Is he really the one I'm looking for?" The voice seemed to flow from the trees all around me. "Who's there?" I yelled, "I am armed, and don't take likely to scare jokes." Then a gentle chuckle sounded. "A joke? I assure you this is not such a thing. You have been marked as a receiver of a gift, a gift from God, and I am the one sent to give you your gift." Not knowing who or what this was, I was unconvinced. "Look, whoever you are, show yourself or leave me alone," I snapped, "If you're mocking my beliefs, I don't take lightly to that either." Another laugh sounded, this time from directly behind me. I spun around. "Quite the contrary, other-worlder, your beliefs are mine as well, and as I was given my gift by another, you are to be given a gift by me." I narrowed my eyes. "What do you want from me?" "Only for you to stay still, and I will reveal myself." I stood there, motionless, waiting. Then the bushes in front of me rustled, then parted to reveal the last thing I expected. I knew what world I was now in, but even then, it's hard to keep your cool when a dragon steps out in front of you!

The dragon looked very much like a cream version of Toothless, but it had two full size pairs of wings overlapping each other on its back. It had one rudder-like tailfin, raised up like a sail, and a longer, more streamline body and head. The mottled pattern that Night Furies have was present, but it was the cream background with a very light reddish orange pattern. Of course, the most shocking thing was that IT WAS TALKING TO ME! "Be not frightened, I have no intention of hurting you," it said, then did something that nearly made me faint from shock. It stood up on its hind legs, and the wings and tail began melting away! The scales softened, the paws turned into hands and feet, and the color swirled around to form a long, flowing dress. Her- yes, I said her, head was no longer a dragon's, but that of a young woman with silky red hair. Needless to say, it was surprising that the only thing I did was fall back on my rear end. I had just watched a dragon transform into a girl!

"You're a dragon!" I stammered. She laughed. "I am a dragon. I said I was given a gift, and this is it. I can turn human. You are now supposed to receive a gift from me. Please stand up if you will." I stood up, too shocked to do anything but obey. She stepped forward. "Now hear me, and remember well. When I give you the gift, you are likely to fall asleep very quickly, as that is what happened to me. When you wake up, nothing will seem to have changed, but something will happen to make you fall asleep again. The second time you wake, your gift will have revealed itself to you. Use it any way you wish, though it is my hope and the hope of the one who instructed me to pass this to you that you will use it for good, to help and heal.

"But, be warned, if you use your gift for anything evil, there will be great consequences." At this she reached out toward me and pressed one finger against my forehead. "Make the right choice." Then, a blinding light appeared where her finger touched my forehead, and a warmth, almost warm enough to burn, began to spread through me. My vision began to swim, and it felt as if the world was spinning around me. The last thing I heard before everything went black was the dragoness: "Good luck, for it is done."

### 3. Chapter 3: Found

\*\*Chapter 3 here, we finally get to see some of the other characters.\*\*

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><p>Two Worlds Collide</p>

#### Chapter Three: Found

Unbeknownst to me as I was lying unconscious in the forests of Berk, two well known friends were making their way over to the cove.

"Alright Toothless, let's land." Hiccup helped the dragon coast down into the cove where their friendship started, and they landed just underneath the rock ledges. Hiccup dismounted and looked around at the scenery he was so very used to, and sighed. "This place definitely brings back memories, doesn't it bud," he said, and leaned back to rest against Toothless. Instead, he promptly fell backwards and landed in the dirt. "Hey, what the heck? Toothless, what are you doing?" The overly curious dragon was a short distance away, sniffing something on the ground and rumbling like he always did when something new presented itself. Hiccup walked over to see what he had found, and Toothless looked up at him, and then looked back down at the ground at whatever he had discovered. Looking closer, Hiccup saw that the dragon had found some sort of cloth, but from what Hiccup could see, it was too small to really be useful for anything, heck, it was even too small to be his own wash cloth! Something else strange about it was that Hiccup had never seen a cloth with such smooth weaving and coloration. It definitely must be expensive, so Hiccup decided that whoever it belonged to, must want it back. He picked it up and held it out to Toothless. "Think you can find the owner?" Toothless smelled it, and rather quickly recognized the main scent as human, but unlike any he had met. This human actually smelled clean, even cleaner than Hiccup (who was well known for bathing far more often than the other Vikings). He decided it would be no problem to find whoever owned this strange little cloth, and nodded at Hiccup. "Alright, then, lead the way!"

Toothless followed the scent trail up to the ledges, and found that it continued up the ledges and out of the cove. Once above the cove, the trail began to meander off into the forest, somewhat toward the village, but Hiccup soon realized that Toothless was heading more in the direction of the hills above the village than back to Berk. They hadn't gone very far before they heard a low, growling roar, and they looked up. Hiccup spotted what appeared to be a dragon about Toothless' size flying off over the mountains toward the other side of the island. Following the path back in the direction it came from, Hiccup realized it had come from somewhere in front of them. "Oh, no. Toothless, we need to hurry! Whoever we're looking for could be hurt!" Even though it had been nearly a year since the pair had ended the Viking/dragon feud, there were still dragons that were apprehensive about people, and Hiccup had even run across a couple that had no qualms about attacking people that got too close. If this person was unfamiliar with dragons and had come across one of these wild dragons, wellâ€!

Toothless began to follow the trail faster, and very soon, they came across a small clearing with a very peculiar sight in it. There, lying in the middle of a patch of grass, was a teenage boy who appeared to be unconscious. The first thing Hiccup noticed were that physical characteristics of the teen: he was a bit taller than Hiccup, but about as thin, with dark brownish red hair that, if straight, may have looked somewhat like Hiccup's own hair in winter. Of course, unlike Hiccup, this boy's hair was wildly curly, and in the humid air of Berk, was very frizzed out and rather amusing looking. Another similarity was that this boy seemed to have that curious air of intelligence about him, and the strange glass spectacles he was wearing only added to that look. Hiccup had heard of people from far off countries wearing these spectacles, but he had never learned what their purpose was, or if they even had one. "Toothless, do you think he looks a bit like me?" Hiccup asked. The dragon looked between the two, and nodded. "That's what I thought."

Next Hiccup noticed that the clothes the boy wore were very unfamiliar, with an almost elastic look, the same smooth and tightly woven quality that the small cloth had, and definitely unlike anything Hiccup had ever personally seen before. He had occasionally seen small garments of silk sold by merchants and traders, and it had the same finely woven quality to it, but this clothing seemed to be a very different material. Also on the boy were a couple of weapons, at least one of which was familiar. There was a sword of impressive quality, at least to Hiccup, though it was a lot smaller than most he was used to, and shone like it was polished that morning. Around one shoulder there was also a rope that appeared to be made of woven leather. Hiccup had heard of whips before, but had never actually seen one himself, so he didn't recognize the weapon.

Hiccup decided that when the boy woke up, he'd ask about all of these new things, but right now, he needed to see if the boy was hurt. "Toothless, help me out here." The dragon came over and nudged his nose underneath the boy's back, helping Hiccup lift him into a sitting position. Hiccup looked over the boy, but at first didn't notice anything wrong: no scratches, no insect bites, heck, nothing worse than a couple of tiny scabs. Then he focused on the teen's head, and noticed an unnatural red color underneath the long hair. He brushed it aside, and gasped. In the very center of the boy's forehead, there was a small white dot with a barely visible spiral line slowly curling out around the dot. Around that, there was a fever red blush spreading across his forehead. "Toothless, bend down so I can get him on your back!" Hiccup said, and began straining to lift the boy up onto Toothless. "I think he's been stung by something, maybe that dragon we saw, whatever it was. We need to get him to the healers, and fast!" Surprised that such a thin teenager could weigh as much as he did, Hiccup took a couple of minutes to get the boy onto Toothless' back, and also grabbed the leather rope, which had fallen off. Then Toothless jumped up into the air and flew as fast as Hiccup allowed him to in the direction of the village. Little did they know that there were going to be many rather exciting events happening to the entire village now because of the mysterious boy they had found, and for everyone, life would never be quite the same again.

## Two Worlds Collide

### Chapter Four: Waking up to Berk

"Urgh." I moved my head a bit, twisting it so that I was looking upward. I opened my eyes slightly, expecting to be staring up at a cloudy sky through the trees. What greeted me instead was a thick wooden ceiling, and I noticed I was lying in a rather not-so-soft bed. I tried to sit up, but felt a rush of lightheadedness wash over me, and I dropped my head back onto the pillow. At least that was relatively soft. I turned my head toward one side, and saw that I was in a rather large room with a few other beds along the walls, and a doorway (minus the door) leading into another room. Carefully lifting my head up, I saw that a large front door was almost directly across the room from where I was laying. I turned my head to look at the other side of the room.

"AAAAAHHHHH!" I jerked bolt upright, my pounding heart taking care of the lightheaded rush afterwards. "Well, I see you're feeling better, and surprisingly soon after whatever gave you that mark yesterday." I could not believe my eyes, knowing just who this first Viking I had met was. "A-Astrid? Where am I, and what are you doing here?" She narrowed her eyes and stood up, spiky blue attire and all. What, does she never change outfit styles? "First of all, my mother is one of the village healers, which is why you are in \*\*my\*\* house, and second of all," she continued, sauntering over to the end of the bed (I'm glad I at least had my clothes still on), "how in the world do you know who I am? I've never seen you around the village before, heck, you don't even look like a Viking!" "Well, neither does Hiccup, but he is a Viking. Now, about how I know you, it would take a long time to explain, but on the other hand, I am planning on heading back here in the near future, so if you could possibly help me find Hiccup's house, I promise I'll tell you as much of the story as I can when I return. Deal?" She narrowed her eyes, but then turned toward the door. "I'll hold you to that. Come on, if you feel you can walk. Oh, and your sword and rope are over there." She pointed to a sort of table by the door, on top of which were my weapons, and above which was an axe, which Astrid grabbed. I stood up and grabbed my weapons, and followed Astrid out her front door.

Even knowing where I was, it was like a blow to the side of the head to step outside. Surprisingly, it was sunny, a supposedly rare thing in Berk, but what caught my eye were the different dragons flying everywhere! Nadders and Nightmares were perched on top of houses and gliding from one rooftop to another, while I spotted Zippelbacks sliding in and out between alleyways and Gronckles sitting in front of doorways like guard dogs. One thing that surprised me was the number of Terrible Terrors everywhere. They moved in little groups along the sides of houses, and practically every other Viking had one perched on his or her shoulder. "Since when did all the Terrors move in?" I asked Astrid. "They're kind of like cats in other places," she said, not bothering to look back, "you know, the common pet and pest controller. Though they do sometimes get to be pests themselves." As we walked along, unsurprisingly, practically every Viking turned to stare at me, being the stranger in town whom nobody knew. Oh, if only they knew how quickly that would change. Of course, those who gave me less-than-friendly stares were greeted with a venomous look of my own, which, surprisingly, seemed to deter them from continuing eye contact.

Astrid led me a short way through the village, because as it turns out, she was only a couple of "blocks" away from where the Chief's house was. We crossed the village square, where the dragon's fishbowl was, and up a hill on the other side. When we reached the door, Astrid knocked, then stepped back slightly. The door swung open, and I was treated to the sight of Stoick the Vast himself, all 7x4 feet of him. "Hello Astrid! I see our newcomer is feeling a bit better now!" he said rather cheerfully. Then he turned to me. "Rather nasty injury ye had on ye yesterday." I shrugged. "Well, if I could gain some assistance, I'd be glad to share some of the story when I return," I said. Stoick looked at me, confused. "Whaddaya mean, return?" Astrid stepped up. "Apparently he needs to see Hiccup about gaining assistance from him in returning home," she said, and gave me a bit of a fisheye, "though I don't see why we can't take him to his island by boat or something." I sighed. "Unfortunately, the way home for me can't be reached by boat, and the person who knows best where I can find my way back is Hiccup." Stoick gave me another look, but turned and yelled into the massive house. "Hiccup! Get down here, will ya? Someone needs yer assistance! Oh, and bring yer beast with ye when you come down!" From somewhere in the house we all heard "Be right there!" A few thumping noises, and Hiccup appeared at the door, Toothless right behind him. "What's going on, Dad?" he asked. Stoick gestured to me. "That boy you found in the woods yesterday apparently needs yer help in getting home. Though I still don't get why he needs you," he said, turning toward me. I rubbed my eyes, getting a bit irritated by the circular conversation here. "Actually, my way home begins near the cove where you found Toothless, and all of the information I know about this place doesn't include how to get there from here. Therefore, I need your help getting back there."

At this point all of us failed to see Toothless slip by Hiccup and out onto the "porch," eyeing me and my sword. "As I already said to Astrid and your father, when I come back I'll try to explain what is going on, that is, when I figure out all that's happened to me. I'm quite sure I'll beâ€¢AAAAAHHHHH!" Toothless had leapt toward me, probably in an attempt to remove the sword from the suspicious person in front of him. Instinctively, I yanked my whip off of my shoulder and lashed out, catching Toothless on his left front leg and creating a small cut. I would be very glad later that I had grabbed my whip instead of my sword. Toothless landed with a short shriek of pain, the noise for some reason causing my vision to blur. I shook it off and looked at the dragon. "Please, Toothless, don't do that again!" I said urgently, breathing hard and not wanting to create any more of a scene. "I will defend myself, I don't care what your reason is!" Toothless apparently didn't care either about what I had just said, as he growled and leapt toward me and my sword again. Again, I lashed out, unfortunately this time a little harder and more accurate, striking Toothless on the side and cutting him from the back of his wing to his front leg. This time, my whip was moving fast enough to crack like a gun, causing everyone, including me, to jump. Toothless hit the ground hard, giving another, louder, shriek and not getting back up to pounce on me again. On the other hand, he didn't need to. His louder shriek seemed to vibrate through every cell of my body, causing my vision to swim and my body to rock off balance. Colors began to fade and I felt myself slipping toward the ground. The last thing I saw before everything blacked out were more figures running up the steps and Stoick growling, "Put him in a cell!"

Hiccup looked down at the strange boy whom he had rescued just the

day before and had now injured his best friend, even if it was seemingly out of self preservation. Now Toothless may not be able to fly for a week, and any moving of his leg was going to be painful due to the cuts the strange teen had somehow made with the exploding rope. Why the teen had passed out when Toothless shrieked was yet another question added to the growing list and the mystery surrounding the stranger. Hiccup made a mental note to find out as quickly as possible who this boy was, but at that point he was more concerned with bandaging Toothless. Stoick, on the other hand, followed the men he had instructed to place the boy in one of the empty dragon cages they now used as prison cells. When they got there, they not-so-gently threw him onto a pile of hay in one of the cells and locked the door. As they left, they failed to notice the dragon "guards" that slept in the ring gathering around the door of the boy's cell as if watching a whole different kind of creature that few had ever seen before rather than a small human.

## 5. Chapter 5: The Gift

\*\*Apologies for the late upload, college is pain. In any case, new chapter's here, and here we finally see just what is in store for all the characters. Mind you, no one ever finds out everything about a new gift or talent right away.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Two Worlds Collide</p>

### Chapter 5: The Gift

I woke up in complete darkness, unable to see anything around me. I had a bit of a headache and a sore side from my not-so-soft landing on the pile of hay I was on. Sitting up, I looked around, hoping to at least catch a glimpse of where I was, but no light was present. I'm guessing I'm in one of the former dragon cells, huh? I wondered. To one side of me, I could hear noises outside, mainly the huffs, growls, and screeches of various dragons, but no people. Yet, I thought I heard voices from outside what I guessed was the door. I listened closer, but wasn't able to make anything out. Sitting back, I decided that I was simply groggy from passing out earlier that day and getting thrown into the dragon cage. Why did I pass out? I wondered, but then thought back to when I ran into the dragoness. She had said that something would make me fall asleep a second time, but what was supposed to happen after that? I couldn't remember, so I lay back down against the hay and sighed, moaning a bit at the same time.

After I heard the noise I had made, I sat up straight again. That was no moan; the sound I had produced was more like a raspy, growling hiss. "Okay, something's not right here." At least my voice was mine. At this point I noticed there was something on my back, seemingly hanging loosely from my shirt or something, but the sensation was so faint I barely felt it. The same sort of sensation was at the base of my spine. I carefully reached back, in case there was some sort of animal on me, or I had laid down in something unpleasant. As I turned to reach behind me, a faint noise like folding leather emanated from whatever it was. When my hand made contact with it, I froze. Whatever was on me was some sort of soft, smooth, and **\*\*scaly\*\*** sail, like a dragon's wing. What scared me, though, was the fact that when I

touched it, it felt like I was touching another part of myself. I could feel my hand through the wing! I had a pair of wings growing out from my back, and when I reached down, I found a long, scaly tail extending out from me.

Exploring myself a bit more, I found that down my back and along my tail to the tip were a single row of almost finlike spines, and at the tip of my tail (that sounds so weird out loud) was a pair of relatively large, back-swept fins, a bit thinner than the ones Toothless has on his tail, and curved almost like wide blades. The spines on my back I found I could control, raising up or laying them down flat along my back, and small scales were covering most of my arms. My fingernails were modified into small, blunt claws, but my fingers were relatively the same. I felt my face, and found that it was also layered in slightly larger, plate-like scales, and my eyebrows were slightly protruding, scaly ridges like you see on vipers or some lizards. Forming a complete picture of myself, I realized I looked like a perfect halfway cross between a typical western dragon, plus the tailfins, and my own human self.

Sitting there in shock for a few minutes, I had only one question to ask. "How did this happen?" I yelled out loud. I ran over a number of possibilities, but as I ruled each one out, I realized there was only one explanation. "The gift," I whispered. "So this was the gift the dragoness gave me. Awesome gift it is, too, but why?" Sitting there, unable to do much in my state of semi-shock but think of an answer, I realized the number of things a dragon could do. I could be a hero! Okay, admittedly that sounds really corny, but it's the truth. I could save people from fire, fly them to safety, catch robbers and criminalsâ€¦ the list goes on.

One thing began to bug me, though: could I change back? If so, how did I change back? I focused on a picture of myself sitting in the dragon cage. Instantly, I felt the scales fade away, and the wings and tail melt back into me. In just a couple of seconds, I was myself again. I noticed my glasses sitting a bit crookedly on my face. Did I even need those anymore? I would have to wait until I got out of the cage to see that. Rubbing my forehead, I got another surprise. Right where the dragoness had touched my forehead, there was what felt like a small spiral of scales. So, I guessed that must have been my mark to show who I was, that I was the one with the gift, but decided to try and keep it hidden for as long as possible. Thank God for my long hair. "Well, at least it's easy to change," I muttered. "Can I change into other forms?" I was able to change into that half dragon/half human mix, most likely the actual dragon species that I was half of too, but what about others? If so, there was one dragon I wanted to try out.

Focusing on a picture of a Night Fury, like Toothless, I tried to control how I changed. First, I focused on the scales. Across my skin, I felt them form, and I reached down to feel where my shirt would be. "Well, there's some good news!" I commented. My shirt had also changed, becoming a part of my new scale suit. So, my clothes would change with me. At least I never had to worry about carrying my clothes with me or shredding them when I changed. I continued my transformation into a Night Fury, and the wings and tail formed. I fell onto all fours, and expanded to full size. Feeling my tail, the typical fins were there, but they were more swept back, somewhat like in my original half-form. Using my tail to feel my back, the crests that a normal Night Fury has were also a bit different, taller and

movable. So, I could change into other dragons, but I also had my own set characteristics. There was one last thing I had in mind to try out: mixing and matching different dragons together with myself, but unfortunately that would have to wait. I heard footsteps outside coming down into what used to be the Kill Ring. I focused on my own self, and quickly changed back. Making a mental note to try my experiment later, I sat down and faced what I guessed was the door. Remember, it was pitch black in there.

The footsteps and muffled voices came closer, and I heard gears moving and being lifted. Then, the door swung open. Jeez, was that light bright! I blinked a couple of times, shielding my eyes, and then began to be able to make out a large number of people standing in the doorway. Taking off my glasses, the forms suddenly became clear. "Well, I guess I don't need those anymore," I mumbled under my breath. Standing in the door of the dragon cage I was in (so I was correct in my assumption on where I was) were some very recognizable forms. There was Stoick, Gobber, Hiccup, Astrid, and the rest of the gang of teenagers from the movie. "Well, it's good to see the whole motley crew is still together," I remarked. "Now, what brings you to my lovely cell? Am I able to leave this place yet?" I turned to Stoick. "And by the way, thank you ever so much for making sure that my house is in an uproar now." Stoick didn't comment back. Hiccup was the first to speak. "What in the world did you do to Toothless?!" "Ah, so you're here for answers, not to let me out. Oh, well, I guess I can't really be surprised." I shifted to face Hiccup better. "To start, be thankful I was only using my whip to defend myself, not the sword, and be glad that I'm kind of fond of dragons as well. That little scuffle that Toothless got himself into could have ended with a whole different result." Hiccup wasn't convinced. "Be thankful? He'll be walking around with a limp and unable to fly for about a week now!" I glared at him. "I simply acted in self defense. He pounced on me, not the other way around, so it's his fault, not mine. Though I regret having injured him anyways, I do not take lightly to getting attacked in any form. Now, had I used the sword in any way, there's a good chance he wouldn't fly for a month at best, and possibly could have been killed, so be happy that his injuries are as mild as they are." Looking around, I saw nearly everyone's face soften a bit. Everyone that is, except for Stoick, of course. Astrid spoke up next. "Who are you, anyways?" I laughed. "I was wondering how long that question would take. Not that it explains much, I'm Hawken, nice to meet you all." "Strange name ye 'ave there, boy," Gobber commented. "Well, now that we know you're name," he continued, "you might as well know who we are, right Stoick?" Looking at the chief and not seeing any refusal of the suggestion, Gobber stepped forward. "Very well then, I amâ€|" I held up my hand, stopping him. "No need to continue, I already know who you all are." Starting at one end of the line, I began pointing at each respective Viking and describing them.

"You're Stoick the Vast, chief of the Hairy Hooligans tribe, and once a very devoted dragon slayer to protect your village." Moving to the next person, "You're Astrid Hofferson, a fashionable warrior teen who is often considered the best of your age level, and was the first person besides Hiccup to find out the truth about dragons." The next person was Gobber. "You, Gobber, have Hiccup as an apprentice in your job as blacksmith, and are very firm in your belief of 'learning on the job'. You also lost both your hand and leg there within the same month to dragons." The next person was the easiest to describe. "Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, you were once the scourge of

the village, but became the first person to shoot down, then befriend a Night Fury, aka Toothless, and destroyed the Red Death." Already everyone's mouth was hanging open, but to drive the point home and to have a bit more fun, I continued. "Fishlegs Ingeman, a living encyclopedia on all dragons in the manual, and the only person who never actually made fun of Hiccup. Ruffnut and Tuffnut Thorston, you're twins who never seem to find a break in tormenting each other, and Snotlout Jorgenson, you are cousin to Hiccup and you're most favorite pastime appears to be trying to flirt with every girl that walks by, especially Astrid during your original Dragon Training." That got a few involuntary snorts out as Snotlout turned beet red. "That should just about cover it."

For a few minutes everyone just stood there, shell shocked and staring at me as I smirked. Finally Stoick shook his head and pointed at me. "you, Hawken, or whoever you are, have a lot o' explaining to do, starting with how the bloody heck ye know so much about us when clearly you're not from anywhere around here!" I rubbed my head, careful not to let any of them see the scale spiral in the middle of my forehead, and sighed. "Well, I was hoping to do this on a future trip here, but I'm guessing I'm not leaving until I explain myself. Am I right?" Everyone nodded. "You've got that right. We're going to keep you here until you tell us everything," Snotlout said. I glared at him. "Not helping, Lout, and thanks for pointing out the obvious." Looking around, I turned to Stoick. "Would it be possible to move somewhere a bit more comfortable? This explanation is going to take a while."

## 6. Chapter 6: Time to Explain

\*\*So, I've received a couple reviews asking whether or not this story will be continuing on, so for those who have not read the author's note on the first chapter: \*\*

\*\*This is Book 1 of a 6-book series that has already been in production for over 3 1/2 years, and 2 1/2 books are already fully typed out. So short answer: yes, this story will be continuing for quite some time, no worries as there is much yet to come for all to read. And I'm still typing out book 3 as we speak and writing up draft one of book 5, so those who follow this story can look forward to updates and then the sequels for probably a couple years to come! :D\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Two Worlds Collide<p>

## Chapter 6: Time to Explain

We moved from the dragon cages and the Kill ring up to Stoick's house so that I could explain myself. I'm betting one of the reasons was that to almost any direction there was quite a bit of village for me to run through before I would reach open land, and behind the Chief's house was a large hill to get past. The others gathered up chairs and various large objects to sit on, and made a semi-circle around me, the other half of the circle blocked by a certain angry dragon. Toothless was sitting behind me and in front of the fireplace, bandages thoroughly covering his left leg and side. If looks could kill, the one he was giving me would have vaporized me on the spot.

Yeah, I don't think he was very fond of me at that point. The Vikings mostly had looks that almost matched, but not in anger, in confusion and disbelief.

Once everyone sat down, I looked around and asked, "So exactly where should I start?" Stoick leaned forward and said, "ye can start with tellin' us exactly where yer from, if not an island here in the archipelago." I sighed. "Well, not that the name means anything much to you, but I come from what is known as the state of Colorado, in a country called the United States, which is on a continent known as North America." Stoick raised an eyebrow. "Yer quite right, that doesn't mean much to me. Where is this 'North America'?" "Do you all know where Greenland is?" Fishlegs nodded. "I do! It's a bit to the west and slightly north of the last island in the archipelago here!" I nodded. "Alright, North America is further to the west and south of there." Everyone gave me shocked stares. "So, you mean there's land past there? The end of the world is further away than we thought?" Hiccup asked. I laughed out loud. "Sorry to burst your bubble, but yes, there's land over there, and the world doesn't end. It's round. Continue in one direction, and you'll end up right back in the same place you started. By the way, can anyone inform me on what year it is here? And if possible, in a more southern description?" Astrid shifted. "The southern traders say that people down there refer to this year as 1168 AD, whatever that means." "Alright, well, this is going to be a bit of a shock, but where I come from, the continents past Greenland won't be discovered by Vikings until nearly 100 years after now, and the rest of the world won't find out about them until around 300 years from now." Gobber pointed his prosthetic hand at me. "Hold on there a minute, lad. If this land you come from won't be found for a hundred years even by us, then how do you know about it and how do ye live there?" I scratched the back of my head and looked around. "That's the strangest part of how I came to be here. Not only am I not from this part of this world, I am not from this world at all, and from a time over 900 years from now. As I said yesterday, I needed Hiccup's help finding my way home because there's a sort of portal, a rip in time and space, which leads to my home."

Everyone sat there for a couple of minutes, unable to say anything. The only noise was Toothless quietly growling behind me. "That would explain the clothes and such," Ruffnut quietly commented. "What was that rope you had? Didn't you call it a whip?" Of course, leave it to the berserk twin to ask about weapons. "You're taking this rather well, and yes, it's a whip. They're quite common in other parts of the world, and have been for thousands of years. There's far worse where I come from, though." Stoick shook his head and stood up, stepping toward me. "Tha' still doesn't explain how ye know so much about all of us. If yer from a whole other world entirely, we shouldn't exist there, right?" I laughed. "Yes, you're completely right. There were Vikings in my world hundreds of years ago, but none of you exist, nor ever existed. Not even Berk and the rest of your archipelago exist, which shows this world isn't quite an exact copy of mine. But yes, all of you aren't real where I come from, except for in imagination." Tuffnut raised an eyebrow. "You mean, we only exist in stories and in people's minds?" I smirked. "Yeah, that's about what imagination means, made up and stories." Snotlout glared at me. "Then how do you know about us? Answer that question!" I held up my hands. "Alright, alright, hold on a minute, I was getting there. Like I said, you guys are made up. An author, or if it helps you understand, someone who writes books, came up with a series of stories featuring you guys as the characters. Then, another group of

people decided to make a different version as a movie, or a moving picture. Considering the fact that Toothless over there is a Night Fury rather than a common garden dragon, I'd say the movie version is a more accurate match to this world." I looked around, and realized I forgot to add one more bit of info. "Oh and here's a real shocker: in my world, all dragons are the same as you guys, made up as myth and legend as far as we know. They have never existed either." A collective gasp went up. Hiccup, unsurprisingly was the most shocked, since his best friend was a dragon. "You mean, until you came here, you've never seen a real dragon before?" I shook my head. "Nope, and I'd say it's rather sad, since dragons are rather up there on the list of things I like. Though, if grumpy over there continues giving me that death glare, I may have to knock them down a notch." Toothless' head jerked up with surprise at my comment, knowing who I was referring to, and then leveled an even narrower gaze at me, hissing to add to the fact that he didn't like me. At least this got a bit of a laugh out of almost everyone, which was better than I had been able to do for that entire day.

Tuffnut turned back to me first. "So let me get this straight. You come from a different world, and a different time, where dragons do not exist, and you learned about us through a made-up story for entertainment?" I nodded. "That about covers it. What's more, the movie that I learned from portrays the period of time from where Hiccup first shot down Toothless to after he wakes up from the battle with the Red Death. Considering how popular the movie is in my world, this has probably made Hiccup one of the most well known characters, and Toothless is one of the most loved dragons out of the many thousands that my world has come up with." Hiccup blushed from the knowledge that he was very well known, and Toothless put on a prideful smirk, enjoying the fact that he was a center of attention somewhere. I looked at him and frowned. "Don't let it go to your head. Fame in my world is often a very bad thing, especially if you happen to be something every child on the planet wants to drag away to their own home for a pet or other." That wiped the smirk off his face rather quickly. Stoick turned to look at me. "Well, now that you have explained a bit about how you came to be here, however outlandish it may sound, it's time for you to find out a bit on how we work here." He gestured to Toothless, and I got a sinking feeling. "Since ye have injured the dragon there, and Hiccup's best friend and protector, your punishment will be to take his place for a few days until he can return to his job." I stared at him in shock. "You can't be serious. Have you any idea what that's going to do to the people in my world? My parents are probably already freaking out since I've been gone for a day and a half now!" Stoick simply leveled one of those I've-made-up-my-mind-there's-no-changing-it looks at me. "Ye should be glad we don't have you doing any real hard labor, or selling you to be a slave. Plus, since yer watching my son, you'll sleep here until Toothless can take over again. A week is not much time to be missing. Watch Hiccup and make sure he doesn't hurt himself too badly, and then you can go home." "A week! Really? My world is fast-paced. If you're gone for two days most people think the worst! My family is going to go nuts! A week is enough time for my entire city to go into an uproar and the rest of my extended family!" Stoick was living up to his namesake. "Well, then, you'd better hope the beast there heals fast."

At this point, there was no moving him, so I had to accept my fate as best I could. After the rest of the Vikings left, Hiccup helped Stoick make out a place for me to sleep in the main room, as it was

already nighttime. Of course, this meant I was sleeping less than fifteen feet from Toothless. "In case ye try anything," Stoick said. "He should be able to take care o' ye, even with a hurt leg. If not, he'll end up waking up the whole village." After Hiccup and Stoick headed upstairs to their rooms (Hiccup's bed was apparently moved back upstairs now that he was used to his prosthetic), I looked over at the black dragon lying on his own, much comfier mat near the fire pit. He was still giving me the draconic version of the evil eye, even after hearing my long explanation. "You realize I'm not afraid of you, right?" Toothless barely did so much as flick an ear. "You realize if you try to hurt me again, or whatever you were doing, I don't need weapons anymore to defend myself. Plus, if you hurt me, no one will be around to watch Hiccup for you. Do you want that?"

Toothless continued to glare at me, definitely not liking how right I was. Slowly, though, he shook his head. "Well, at least you can understand me." I sighed, and began to lie down to try and get some sleep. Then, deciding I really didn't want to be on the bad side of a Night Fury, especially one that was friends with Hiccup, I turned back to Toothless. "Okay, let's get this over with, alright? I'm sorry for hurting you, I really am, and I'd rather not have to do it again. Still, I don't enjoy being pounced on, whatever the reason, especially by a twenty-foot dragon. Please realize I thought you would have hurt me more than I hurt you had I not done what I did. Would it be at all possible to forgive and forget?" Toothless sat there for a while, as if pondering his answer to my question. At least he no longer looked like he wanted to bite my head off.

Finally, he turned to me and nodded, but with a bit of a smirk on his face. I was sure he was going to find some way of getting back at me somewhat, but I could stand that, especially now. "Oh, good. I really don't want to end up in that situation again. Well, if you don't mind, it's time for me to sleep, so I'll see you tomorrow." Looking around, I was glad to see that no one was there to see the crazy boy carrying on a conversation with a dragon. If only I knew how commonplace that would be soon. With my proclamation of sleep, Toothless lay down again, one eye open to watch me. I didn't mind that, and expected it of course, so I lay down to sleep. "Lord, please keep my family safe while I'm here," I said, then closed my eyes.

::Did he really? Does he know him? I'll have to find out somehow. Maybe he's not so bad after all.:: I jerked upright and looked around, searching for the source of the voice. Seeing no one, I shivered, not recognizing the rough, growling voice I had heard. With a last glance over at Toothless, who had lifted his head up and turned to look at me, I lay down again and very slowly drifted off to sleep. Little did I know how much my short time away from home had already affected my own family.

\* \* \*

><p>Denise stood out on her front porch with her husband, Sam, looking up and down the street. Their daughter had already gone to bed, crying for her brother and praying that he was safe. He had been gone for nearly two days now, and no sign of him had shown up. Denise had contacted the police, who were doing a thorough search for the teen, but to no avail. Of course, who would have believed that their son had found his way into a whole different world, let alone found the entrance in his own back yard? Of course, it was a good thing no one had thought to search the yard itself, for if anyone had found the crossroad between worlds, they would have been too shocked to

stand it, and the boy's parents would have collapsed with all the new worries such a thing could add. For now, Hawken's family simply thought they would just have to wait, and pray that he would be found safe and sound. What a shock they would get when their son returned, revealing a whole new set of adventures for everyone.<p>

## 7. Chapter 7: Secrets and Surprises

\*\*A/N- So, I just noticed that the upload process wipes out some of the punctuation required for my story, specifically the form of the dragon's speech. For those who read the last chapter, I will be making some updates to fix that issue.\*\*

\*\*Also, in this chapter there is some belief-based conversation, and apologies if it reads awkwardly. Remember, these chapters were written a couple years ago, so bear with me. :D\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Two Worlds Collide<p>

### Chapter 7: Secrets and Surprises

Throughout the day, I got to enjoy the lovely job of following Hiccup around the village doing this, that, or the other. Unsurprisingly, he spent most of his time doing his job at the forge, but near midday we also went down to the docks to help the fishermen. Toothless, of course, followed as best he could with his limp (despite Hiccup's protest for him to stay in the house), and helped himself to a whole bag of fish before the fishermen shooed us all away. At the forge, however, a couple of things happened. First, I got to see just how good Hiccup actually is at blacksmithing, and second, I also got treated to a couple of nice new burns, some of them received while preventing Hiccup from falling into something or the other.

Naturally, with that much time spent together, even if Hiccup was rather apprehensive about me, conversation started up sooner or later.

"So, Hawken, what is it that you like to do, you know, coming from a whole new world and all?" Hiccup asked while he pounded a sword flat with his own special made hammer. "Actually, I enjoy a few different things," I began. "I like reading, fishing, and growing plants." "Well, it's nice to hear about at least one other person who likes to read," Hiccup drawled, "except for Fishlegs, since he rambles off everything he reads, but what do you mean by the plants part? Do you enjoy growing food in a garden?" I laughed as I handed him a pair of cold tongs. "Well, yes, I do enjoy gardening, but my forte is carnivorous plants." The pounding stopped as Hiccup turned to me, eyes wide and bulging. "You mean, you grow man eating plants? There's such a thing?" At this, I had to laugh again, and shook my head. "No, no, there's no plant big enough for that, however much I wish there was. They eat insects and things, and I have some that could eat rats one day." "That's still a big plant," Hiccup commented as he went back to the sword. I nodded and continued. "Yeah, it is, and they look cool too. Most of them look like or have fancy flowers, and that's why people like me usually grow them. Though I will admit, I am a bit sadistic when it comes to the insect eating part." Hiccup went over to the cooling bucket and dipped the sword in, causing a loud hiss. "Well, I know I've never heard of them, so I doubt there

are any near here. How many kinds do you have?" "I have over 50, and there's nearly 700 around the world. And you know, there just might be some around here. They're just hard to find." Hiccup nodded as he looked over the sword, placing it back on the bellows to heat it up again.

"Any other strange things you like?" he asked. I nodded. "I like snakes." Hiccup turned and gave me a fisheye. "How do you like those things? Every one I've ever known about is dangerously venomous, especially the White Rogue." I snorted, shaking my head. "Not so. Maybe around here they're mostly dangerous, as often happens in cold parts of the world, but elsewhere most are harmless. I keep some of the harmless kinds as pets. Of course, if you scare them you will still get a painful bite," I said, smirking. Hiccup chuckled. "You sound like that's coming from experience." He began pounding out the reheated sword again, as it now began coming flat and sharp. "I have to admit, though, I do like looking for strange and new things, especially in the forest," He said. "There's lots I don't know about, and you just gave some perfect examples about things I would like to learn about."

As we worked, Toothless was lying up against the bellows and keeping an eye on both of us, of course especially on me. Hiccup looked down at him. "He seems to have warmed up a bit to you rather quickly after what you did yesterday." He looked over at the tool bench. "Hand me those tongs would you?" I shrugged as I grabbed the tongs. "Well, apologies can do wonders for breaking tension." I handed Hiccup the tongs, and he took them and dunked the sword into the cooling bucket again. He turned back to me, a confused look on his face. "Are you saying you actually apologized to Toothless?" "Uh, yeah, why not? I can bet he's nearly, if not equally, as smart as most people. He probably knows things we could never even guess at, too." Hiccup stared at me quizzically. "Okay, a bit confusing, but I see what you mean. He's probably a lot smarter than some of the Vikings around here." We laughed at that and continued working.

For a while we worked in silence, and I kept catching tidbits of conversation outside the forge window as other Vikings passed by. "He's definitely not from around here." "I don't trust him. Maybe he's a spy." "See what he did to Toothless? What if we're next?" "Maybe he's not that bad." ::He's not a Viking, but I kind of like him.:: I jumped and looked out the window. That voice was not a normal one, and much like what I had heard the night before. Hiccup looked at me with a bit of a concerned look on his face. "You alright? Something going on out there?" That brought me back to the present. I shook it off and decided not to tell Hiccup. Maybe it had something to do with the gift. "No, no," I said, "I just thought I heard something." Hiccup didn't look at all convinced, but went back to the current sword anyways. "You definitely are strange." I laughed. "Thanks, I'll take that as a compliment," I said sarcastically.

We stayed there for a few more hours until evening came around, and Hiccup decided it was time to head back to his house. I was glad it wasn't one of his famous 'stay up late in the forge' nights. When we arrived, a bit slowly since Toothless still limped, we were treated to a fairly uneventful evening and a meal of roasted chicken (who knew Stoick could cook at all?). After that, there was a bit of an awkward conversation between father and son about the day's events, especially awkward since a lot of it concerned me. Eventually, the

two got tired and began heading upstairs to their rooms. As I prepared to go to sleep on my not-so-comfy mat, I noticed there was one being who was not following his usual nightly routine. Toothless got up and limped over to sit next to me. "What is it that you want?" I asked, slightly irritated. It was late at night now, after all. "This is time for sleep when it comes to us humans, whether you're nocturnal or not." Toothless continued to sit and stare at me with those huge, almost unnervingly green eyes. ::Don't kid me. You're not completely human anymore.:: I jumped back. That was the same voice I had heard the night before, and much like the one I had heard earlier that day. It was definitely not human, as it was more like a growling noise I could comprehend. At this point I finally realized where it was coming from: Toothless. "Youâ€| you can talk?!" Toothless narrowed his eyes. ::Yes, I can talk, every dragon can talk.::

I sat there in shock for a few minutes, unable to think. This wasn't like the dragon that gave me the gift, as she could actually speak like a human. Here, I actually understood a dragon in its own tongue! As those thoughts went through my mind, it clicked. \_The gift!\_ I realized. "So, since I can become one of you, I can understand you creatures now?" I queried. Toothless nodded and gave a draconic sigh. ::Yes, you can understand all of us now,:: he said, ::And vice versa, we can understand you perfectly whether said dragon has been near people or not. That is, if I am completely right about what you are, and who made you a Halfling.:: I sat there, dumbfounded for a couple of minutes. "So this has happened before?" I asked. Toothless nodded. ::A few times according to legend. Very few people or dragons have been worthy of receiving the gift, though nearly always indirectly, from one source or another. The last Halfling was a dragon, and she should still be alive now.:: I nodded. "Did she happen to be cream and peach in color, and look a lot like you?" Toothless nodded. ::So it was the Mystique who gave you the gift. She hasn't been seen anywhere near here for over 15 years.:: "So that's what that dragon is called. Did you know about here being able to speak human too?" Toothless sat there in thought for a few minutes. ::In theory, she should have been able to. I guess you proved that theory though.:: "Uh huh. Well, I am getting a headache from all this, so I think it's about time I go to bed. We can talk more if you want tomorrow." I turned to lie down, but Toothless nudged me in the side.

::Wait a second. Last night you were giving prayer to something. Do you believe the same thing the Vikings do?:: I sighed. "I really don't like these religious conversations, but no, I believe in only one God." ::We dragons only believe in one higher being too!:: I raised an eyebrow and gave Toothless the fisheye. "You're not making fun of me, are you?" Toothless hissed a bit at that. ::The Mystique said the gift was from God, yes?:: I nodded. ::Then would it not make sense that we dragons would believe her and those before her on that matter?:: I sat there for a moment. "I guess it could make sense." ::Exactly. So, yes, we don't believe the same things as the Vikings, and it appears we believe the same thing as you.:: I sighed. "Well, isn't this just a perfect time to sing 'It's a Small World After All.' But I am really getting a headache. Do you mind if I could go to sleep now?" Toothless sighed. ::Fine, but I wish to speak with you tomorrow again.:: "Alright, maybe tomorrow night. Good night then," I said, and turned to finally lie down and go to sleep. Toothless trotted off to his mat, and lay down. As I fell asleep, I had no idea how much I would need a good night's rest, as tomorrow was going to be one extremely hectic day for me.

## 8. Chapter 8: A Hero of a Different Kind

\*\*A/N-Over 400 views already! Much better than what I was expecting, considering how the first part of this story is written out. Thanks to all who are following, and remember, while I feel these early written chapters are less than stellar especially compared to my later writing, I do like hearing your thoughts, and reviews are more likely to help me keep up the quick upload pace!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Two Worlds Collide</p>

### Chapter 8: A Hero of a Different Kind

I woke up to the third morning of my unwilling time in Berk due to a large crash coming from upstairs. "Hiccup! What in Thor's name are ye doin' in there?" I heard Stoick yell. Toothless and I gave each other twin glances of annoyance. We were both of the type that likes to sleep late. "Sorry," I heard Hiccup reply, "The shield just fell off the wall! Everything's fine!"

A couple of minutes later Hiccup came running, or more like stumbling, down the stairs and landed in front of Toothless and I. "Morning," he said. "Guess what?" I shrugged, not liking the look of excitement on his face. "What?" I replied sarcastically. With Hiccup, excitement usually meant disaster waiting to happen. "I've got the day off Come on, hurry up and get up! Time's a wastin'!" Hiccup said, speed walking toward the door. Toothless and I exchanged glances, and I looked back at Hiccup as I sat up. "Shouldn't we at least have breakfast first?" I asked. Hiccup slowed and turned around. "I guess you're right. It is the most important meal of the day." I raised an eyebrow. "So you know that saying too, huh?" Hiccup just nodded, and proceeded to make a hasty breakfast consisting of some sort of porridge for him and I, and a basket of fish for Toothless.

Exiting the door, I saw there was a whole lot more hustle and bustle than usual in the village. Hiccup explained that it was market day, the day all the villagers set up stalls to sell or trade the extra goods they had. "Occasionally other villages send ships to trade with us as well," Hiccup continued, "but today it's just us." I let out a breath of relief. If anything were to happen today, I didn't want to instantly make a name for myself throughout the whole Viking populace. We spent a couple of hours wandering about the stalls, with Hiccup occasionally buying some food here or some sort of craft or material there, Toothless still defiantly limping behind and helping carry the items. As it turns out, some Vikings appear to be pretty good tailors, considering the designs of the clothes and scarves I saw, and the decorative hats and helmets that were everywhere as well. I happened to be looking at a batch of throwing knives in one of the stalls near the forge when I heard Hiccup yelp.

"AAHH! Oh, uh, hi Astrid." I turned around and burst out laughing at the sight. Hiccup was beet red, apparently never having completely gotten over his difficulties with talking with girls. Astrid was just smirking, having scared Hiccup by way of a simple tap on the shoulder. "You never learn, do you," she said. "Always watch everything around you. Focusing on just one thing can get you into trouble." I stepped up. "She's right, you know," I said, "it's

happened to me more times than I care to elaborate on." Hiccup just deflated. "Oh, great, now there are two of you," he said. Astrid stepped up to him and grabbed the front of his shirt. "What's that supposed to mean?" she said, a hint of danger in her voice. "Well, I uh, I didn't mean it that, uhâ€¦" Hiccup began stuttering. Astrid let go of him and punched him in the arm. "That's for unintentionally insulting me," she said. Hiccup threw up his hands. "How was Iâ€¦." he was stopped by a full kiss on the lips from Astrid. "That's to show I know you were joking," she said.

::Can we get moving again?:: Toothless asked. I looked at him, then up to Hiccup. "Hey, can we keep moving? It's kind of boring standing in one place," I said. Astrid gave me a fisheye. "I still don't trust you, you know," she said. "Nah, really?" I drawled. "He's right, I've still got a few stops to make before I'm open," Hiccup said hurriedly. We started moving again, Astrid tagging along to keep an eye on me and talk to Hiccup, and Toothless followed behind. After a while, we started to head down toward the docks where the fishermen were and where the boats were kept. Hiccup wanted to see if he could help, and also see if there was anything good in the catch of the day. At this point, I should mention that any permanently grounded creature should only traverse the walkways down to the docks when absolutely necessary, and stay as far from the edge as possible. The wooden boards making up the paths are placed directly into the cliff face, and hang out from 300 feet above the ocean to the docks, and there are no railings of any kind to stop you from going over the side. Even worse, specifically for Hiccup, the boards are uneven, and so Hiccup's prosthesis kept getting stuck between the planks.

Normally this would not be a problem, but this was a place where the people had little fear of open spaces, and there were very large animals around. The four of us made our way slowly down the pathway, watching the bustling crews below us on the docks. Eventually we came to a point where the path curved around a point, and no one could see us from the village or the docks. Hiccup stepped into a crack in a plank, and began working on getting his prosthesis out. This had happened a number of times, so Astrid and I just slowed up a bit and continued. Toothless, however, was behind us, and kept walking as he stared out at the horizon. Two plus two equals four, and a twenty foot dragon behind a boy with his foot in a crack spells disaster. Toothless walked right into Hiccup, dislodging his foot from the crack, but destroying his balance and he began to fallâ€¦ off the edge.

"HICCUP!" Astrid and I stopped and jumped toward Hiccup at the same time, hoping to grab one of his flailing arms. Unfortunately, jumping for the same spot often causes collisions, and Astrid and I slammed together, falling onto the planks in a daze. Toothless jumped for Hiccup, but was too late. "AAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!" Hiccup teetered off the edge, and fell toward the ocean, a good hundred foot drop. The three of us still on the path jumped up, even in pain, and glimpsed Hiccup just as he hit the water. He did not come up. I turned to Astrid. "Go get Stoick and Gobber! Meet me at the docks!" She shook her head. "I'm going in after him," she said and turned to jump. "NO!" I yelled, and grabbed her arm. She gave me a look of death and fear. "He's got a metal leg. There's no way you could reach him in time," I said, "plus there's probably an undertow, and he's being dragged further away. I can get him though. I'll explain later." She nodded, and began sprinting for the chief's house. I turned to

Toothless. "Go with her." He nodded, and began running as well, limp ignored. I turned, and jumped over the edge and into a dive, focusing on a picture that I thought could help. Instantly, my body lengthened and became covered in scales. Two large fins appeared at the end of my new tail, with wings modified into powerful fins, and a pair of finlike crests ran down my back. I depth charged into the water, and finished changing, growing webbed feet, and finishing out at around 50 feet in length. My vision switched to being able to see better underwater, and I looked around frantically. Too much time had already passed.

Astrid sprinted up the path toward Stoick's house, and burst through the door. "Stoick! Are you here?!" she yelled urgently. Stoick came down the stairs with a concerned look on his face. "What's wrong?" he asked. "Hiccup fell off the path to the docks!" Stoick's face lit up with fear. "Come on!" he yelled. "We need to get Gobber!" They raced to the forge, passing Toothless on the way, who was starting to slow down due to his injured leg. They reached the forge, where Gobber was pounding out a new axe head. "Ah, Stoick, what brings you here?" Gobber asked cheerfully, barely looking up. "We need to get down to the docks! Hiccup fell off the path!" Astrid yelled. Gobber dropped the axe head and his tools, and came racing out. They all ran down to the path, and down to the docks. "Where is that Hawk-whoever kid that was supposed to be with Hiccup?" Stoick asked as they raced to the end of the longest dock. "He jumped in after him," Astrid said, "and he told me we needed to meet him at the docks." Stoick shook his head. "What can he do? Now we'll have to rescue both of them!" Stoick said. "Get a rescue boat ready!" he yelled. Gobber grabbed his shoulder. "That'll take too long. Hiccup will sink with tha' leg o' his, and we won't get out there in time. We had better just hope that the boy Hiccup was with knows what he's doing."

I continued to search all around me for Hiccup. There! Hiccup was struggling to reach the surface, about twenty feet down and a couple hundred yards out, and moving further away fast. I began power swimming toward him, but before I could reach him, Hiccup stopped struggling and quickly began sinking. I poured on more speed and dived down, positioning myself underneath him and rising up. He landed on my neck, and I continued to force my way upward. I surfaced quickly, head and neck exploding up out of the water, and angled over to shallower water at the base of the cliff. Once I reached there, I turned my head and nudged Hiccup. He didn't move. "Come on, wake up!" I said, and nudged him again.

Hiccup suddenly began coughing and sputtering, water spraying out of his lungs. He put his arms around my neck to hold on and keep from falling off, and looked up at me. "Th-thanks, whoever you are," he chattered, probably from the cold. I gave a huff, and smiled. "No problem. I'm not about to let you drown. I don't work that way." Hiccup froze, and glanced back up at me. "H-Hawken? Is that you?" I nodded. "But how didâ€¢?" he stopped, unable to form the next words. I looked back at him as I turned out to deeper water to get around the point and to the docks. "I'll tell you later. Right now, we need to get you to the docks so that you can recuperate and dry off. I doubt that falling 100 feet into an ocean and nearly drowning will give you nothing but a wet shirt." Hiccup winced and tried to stretch. "Now that you mention it, I'm afraid I do feel pretty sore. My head hurts too." He sighed and laid down on my neck. "Thanks, again." I gave a gentle shrug and rounded the point, heading for the longest dock. I could see Astrid, Stoick, and Gobber race up to the

end and begin frantically searching for me and Hiccup. They couldn't see us, since we were a ways away and I matched the color of the water. That, and I was at such an angle that my head obscured Hiccup as well. Oh, well, this will be good for a little joke, I thought.

I continued to swim toward the dock, taking it slow so as not to jostle Hiccup around too much, since he was a bit injured and waterlogged. As I neared the end, I began picking up the conversation. "It's been too long," I heard Stoick say, "We need to get out there!" "I'm afraid that won't help now, Stoick, we need to see if any sign shows of them." I hear worried sighs escape from all three of them, and at this point, I reached the end of the dock. I rose up above the platform, and began to climb up onto it. All three of them gasped and jumped back, and Astrid instinctively reached for her axe. I gave her a glare, and she, out of uncertainty, dropped her hand. At this point, Toothless made it back down to the docks, out of breath and limping badly. He spotted me, and began moving faster. I shook my head, and he slowed back down.

"What the devil is that?" Stoick blurted out. Gobber just stared at me and blinked. I chuckled. "Actually, nothing at all like the devil. You have nothing to fear from me." The three of them gasped again, and stared, shell-shocked, with their mouths agape. I laughed. "Close your mouths, you'll catch flies." They shut their mouths, and Astrid tentatively stepped forward. "Who are you?" I smirked. "The one who saved Hiccup." I turned my head, and nodded, and Hiccup gingerly slipped off my back, as he had slid backwards when I climbed up onto the docks. Stoick rushed forward and grabbed Hiccup, embracing him in a bear hug. "Thank goodness yer safe," he said. Hiccup squirmed. "UH, Dad, can't breathe. In pain." Stoick let go. "Sorry," he said, then turned to me. "Eh, thank you for saving my son, whatever you are, but could you please tell us why you saved him and not the other boy as well?" I raised an eyebrow, or at least my draconic version of one. "Wow. You really haven't figured it out yet?" I began shrinking down, and everyone gasped again, while Toothless reached us, and began nuzzling Hiccup. Hiccup hugged Toothless, and Toothless looked up at me. ::Thank you for saving him,:: he said. I nodded.

At this point, Astrid pointed a questioning finger at me. "Are you Hawken?" I burst out laughing. "One and the same! It's about time you figured it out." By this point, I was nearly myself again, and the last hints of bluish green scales faded away, replaced by my clothes. "Pardon the dramatic entrance, butâ€¢" Stoick stared at me, mouth wide open again. "How in Thor's name did ye do that?" he asked. I shook my head. "It has nothing to do with your gods at all. Someone very different allowed this. I know a much longer explanation is needed, but right now I am going to help Toothless get Hiccup up to his house." I stepped over to the pair, and Hiccup put one arm on Toothless, and the other around my shoulders. "Thanks," he said. "No problem. You need it," I replied. We then proceeded to head up toward his house, Astrid following close behind, but not close enough to be part of any conversation. She was now even more apprehensive about me, but not for the former reasons.

Word spread far faster than we walked, and before we were even halfway through the village, I began receiving stares from the villagers, and kept hearing whispers of "devil," and "Loki" all along the way. I rolled my eyes in exasperation. ::Ignore them,:: Toothless

said, ::They don't understand yet, and I don't think they like you any more than before.:: "Nah, you think?" I drawled sarcastically. Hiccup gave me a strange stare, or at least as much as he could what with exhaustion and cold. "Who are you talking to?" he asked. I mentally slapped myself. "You're an idiot, Hawken," I whispered, then sighed and turned to Hiccup. "Thanks to my abilities, I can understand everything dragons are saying. Though, that's not always a good thing." That earned a growl from Toothless. ::You're not funny,:: he said, and Hiccup and I laughed. "Hiccup and I disagree," I replied. Toothless deflated and began mumbling under his breath, something about unpleasant humans or other.

We made it back to Hiccup's house, and got him dry and warmed up. I helped Toothless check Hiccup for any breaks or other injuries, nothing too personal, though, and he was good as new, save the aching muscles from the impact with the water. Astrid never came in, and I assumed she had gone back to talk with Stoick. A couple of minutes later Stoick burst into the house. "Meeting in the Mead Hall," he said tersely. " Hiccup, if yer feeling well enough, I need all three of you in there as soon as possible." "Yeah, be there in a minute," Hiccup said. Stoick left, headed for the hall. I groaned, and looked back at Hiccup. I shook my head, and said, "Well, time for one heck of a bad conversation."

## 9. Chapter 9: Shattering Reality

\*\*A/N- Back again! One piece of action over, the next bit just around the corner. As always, bear with me as these are old chapters, but reviews are still appreciated!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Two Worlds Collide</p>

## Chapter 9: Shattering Reality

"Okay, okay, listen up!" Stoick yelled. We were all in the Mead Hall: Stoick, the gang, Toothless, me, and a good two or three hundred other Vikings. I really was not interested in finding out how often Vikings bathed. Ugh.

Hiccup, Toothless, and I were standing by a column nearest Stoick, and the rest of the teens were about 10 feet off to our right. Stoick was standing in front of the stone table that surrounded the hall's fire pit. "Alright, ye all probably know why we're here, so I'll make it short. The newcomer, Hawken, just earlier saved mah son from drowning when nobody else could. How he did so, however, is what we came here to discuss, as I have heard there are a few questions needing be answered." He turned to look at me. "Hawken?"

I sighed and stood up, and walked over to the edge of the table, placing my hands down and looking out at the crowd. "Where exactly should I begin? No, hold that thought, how many here already know where I come from?" The response I got was rather startling. I knew Ruffnut, Tuffnut, and Snotlout to be rather gossipy, but just about the only people who knew my origins were those present at the talk in Stoick's house. "Well then, that gives me a good place to start, as it will probably answer a few questions. Long story short, I come from a different world entirely, one where dragons do not exist and

this whole world was made up as a story for entertainment. I came to this village thanks to some sort of time-rip connection between our two worlds." Shocked gasps reverberated around the room, and suspicious mutterings began to float about.

"Now, before anyone jumps to conclusions, my, eh, abilities did come from your world," I explained. "They were given to me by a dragon that was on this island when I came through the portal." Hiccup stood up and walked up to me. "Did you say dragon?" He asked. I nodded. "I didn't stutter, did I? Yes, a dragon, but not like any around here."

"What did it look like?" someone asked. I thought back. "Sort of like Toothless there," I said, gesturing toward said Night Fury, "but with light cream and peachy red and orange markings. Oh, and it had two pairs of full size wings instead of just one." ::Most undeniably the Mystique,::: Toothless said. ::Their species is rare as it is, and almost never seen around here.::: I gave him a sidelong glance. "Yeah, you already explained that."

Everyone in the hall gave me strange looks. After a couple of seconds it got irritating. "What?" I snapped. Then it clicked. "Right, you can't understand him." A few more gasps reverberated around the room. Stoick pointed an accusing finger at me, then to Toothless. "Ye can understand the beasts?" I shook my head. "No, I just have a mental problem that makes voices in my head. Yes, I can understand him. And no, it's not because of where I'm from, it's only because of the abilities I have now." I looked out at the crowd. "By the way, they're not beasts," I said loudly. "They are highly intelligent, most at least as smart as people. Some, like the Night Fury there, are probably as intelligent as the smartest of any of us, maybe more." That earned a few irritated glares.

"A-anyways," Hiccup said, "back to the dragon you encountered. You said it directly gave you the powers you have?" "Yes, I already said that," I drawled. "Sorry, just trying to clear things up here," Hiccup replied. "I've heard stories from down further south about a dragon like that. Supposedly they can speak sometimes." I laughed. "Only one can, and she can do more than speak. When I came here, I was somewhat expecting dragons, but the Mystique, as Toothless calls her, turned human when she gave me the gift. Like me now, anyone who is given the gift, I speculate, can become a member of either race." Gobber gave me a dumbfounded look. "So, ye mean there are dragons that can become human?" "That is what I said. And only one can, as far as I know."

Plenty of the Vikings in the crowd weren't convinced. "How do we know this ain't just a trick of Loki?" someone asked. I sighed. "Goody, just another tidbit to share. I believe in a very different faith than Vikings do, so I cannot be Loki's toy. I believe in only one God, as it turns out so do the dragons, and only a select few chosen by our God are given gifts like mine. Mind you, this is what we believe, and besides what I can do now, I have no evidence that I can give to say outright that you all are wrong." Gobber stood up from the bench he was sitting at, and leveled his hook hand at me. "So, yer sayin' we are wrong about something once again?" I held up my hands. "Lets not get into a religious discussion, it always ends up badly. I believe what I believe, you believe what you believe, let's just end it there."

As my little spiel ended, Hiccup took over and gave his account of what happened when he found me afterward. "So that's how I ended up in the village," I whispered to myself. As expected, the Q and A session went quite a while, but throughout it all, everyone just started getting antsier, and I was getting many a mixed look from people. Some were starting to look accepting, but many were starting to look at me with suspicion.

Suddenly I felt a large, wet tongue slide up my face. "Hey!" I snapped, sliding away in surprise and disgust. "What gives?" Toothless stared at me, and then leaned over and nudged me. ::I'm trusted here. If I show that I trust you, everyone will calm down.:: I sighed, and then sat back down. "Whatever."

However embarrassing it was, my being nuzzled by Toothless garnered the attention of just about every Viking in the room. "Well, if the beast likes 'im, then I think we can trust him," Stoick remarked. "Well of course the Fury like him!" someone at the back of the crowd yelled. "He's half dragon!" A murmur of agreement swept through the crowd. "Now hold on, how many times has the Night Fury been wrong about newcomers, eh?" Stoick asked sharply. Gobber answered. "Almost never." "Exactly. Besides, he did save mah son. Anyone who does that likely isn't here to hurt us, now is he?" Finally, people started nodding approval, and a few minutes later, everyone started drifting off as the short-notice meeting ended. I sighed with relief, and walked over to Hiccup. "Now what?"

He sighed, and then looked around. "Not sure. We might as well head back up to my house." So with that, we exited the Mead Hall. The hall itself was built into the side of a cliff a couple of roads down from Hiccup's house, so it was a bit of a trek back up. Of course, silly me to think that now my secret was out, everything would go smooth and dandy.

"Hey dragon boy!" I grimaced, and turned around. There, walking up the road like they owned the place, were none other than the famed pranksters, Snotlout and Tuffnut. "What do you want?" I snapped. "I'm not in the mood for any of your antics after what I've been through right now. Saving a life and giving a speech right afterward kind of takes it out of a guy, alright?" "Oh, come on, a half-dragon can't be that tired, now can you?" Tuffnut remarked. They both had a bit of a mischievous look in their eyes, so I decided to turn the tables on them as I didn't like how this was panning out.

Focusing on a new picture, my own eyes suddenly changed views slightly as they morphed into Nightmare eyes. Speaking of eyes, it still felt really weird not needing glasses everywhere I went. As the two boys neared, I watched as they caught sight of my face and slowed, their expressions quickly changing from smirks to uncomfortable wariness, to nervousness, and they stopped about ten feet away. Hiccup noticed what they were staring at, and snickered a bit.

"Now, what exactly was it that you were wanting?" I drawled, a slight touch of danger in my voice. It's not often that Snotlout stumbles on his own words. "Oh, uh, w-well, we were just, uh, wondering if—" "We were wondering if you guys wanted to join us in a little race and a , uh, drink!" Leave it to Tuffnut to save the day. Hiccup and I glanced at each other, and started to chuckle. "No thanks," I said, "We're not in the mood for races right now." "And you should remember that

guys like us don't drink," Hiccup added. Snotlout waved a hand at us, and he and Tuffnut turned to walk away. "Fine, your loss." Hiccup and I did the same. When he thought we were both out of hearing range, Snotlout muttered under his breath, "Loser."

I stopped, turned back toward the two, who had their backs to us, and shot a blast of Nadder fire between the pair of them. They screamed and jumped, stumbling and falling back on their rear ends. "What theâ€¢! !" I smirked. "Watch out who you're condescending toward next time," I shouted. "Maybe you'll rethink that opinion you have of me in the future." I turned back again and joined Hiccup and Toothless. When we reached Hiccup's house, Hiccup closed the door and burst out laughing.

"Was it really that funny to you?" I remarked. He nodded, and I turned to see Toothless chuckling in his own draconic way. "Oh, great. Not you too." ::You have to admit, it was funny. They don't often get to be the butt of the joke,:: he replied. "Oh, so the dragon agrees with Hiccup. Who would've guessed?" I shook my head. "Fine, it was funny, but not enough to fall over laughing from."

Suddenly, outside there was a loud BONG! I froze, and watched as Hiccup and Toothless jumped to their feet and headed for the door again. "What's going on?" I asked, starting to get worried. ::One of the alarm bells,:: Toothless said. "Someone's coming", Hiccup said, "Someone we weren't expecting. I can't tell whether they're here to attack or other yet, though." I sighed and followed them, muttering, "Does the action ever end around here?"

#### 10. 10: Enemies and Friends, New and Old

\*\*A/N- So I've realized I have not yet elaborated on what all will play into this series from the original movies and such. As is obvious, HTTYD1 is canon, and throughout the story there will be references to various scenes throughout the DreamWorks Dragons series. Some of those episodes have happened, some will have elements occurring later in the stories, and some will not be here at all. Keep a sharp eye out for the hints and references as we move along. There are some references from the books, mainly characters that will play large parts and names of some of the other tribes, but mostly this series does revolve around the movie universe. HTTYD2 does not come into play until the 5th book, though, so much patience will be needed before you see how I deal with that.\*\*

\*\*Anyway, on with Book 1...\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Two Worlds Collide<p>

#### Chapter 10: Enemies and Friends, New and Old

We burst out of the house and raced back down to the Mead Hall. I looked at Hiccup. "Y'know, this racing around the village has really got to stop," I said sarcastically. Hiccup just rolled his eyes and kept on running, or at least as best as he could with his leg.

When we got there, Stoick, Gobber, and some of the other older

Vikings were already there. Hiccup walked up beside his father. "Who is it?" he asked. Stoick looked at him, and then shook his head in irritation. "The Clobbering Clubswingers are payin' us a visit, apparently." I raised an eyebrow. \_Who the heck gives themselves a name like that? \_I wondered. I looked at Stoick. "And who exactly are they? I don't remember hearing about them anywhere. Are they friends or foes?" Hiccup let out a deflated sigh. "Bitter enemies," he said, "and it only got worse when I ended the war with the dragons."

::They were famous for their dragon fighting skills,:: Toothless continued, looking up at me. ::Clubswingers were very blunt in their actions, and are even still well known for displaying their 'trophies' that they have brought down.:: he looked over to the doors of the Mead Hall. ::Now that all the other tribes have accepted dragons as friends, and sided with Berk, Clubswingers have been outcast to an extent, and have sworn revenge on those who ended their displeasing fun.::

I'm pretty sure I had a shade of green on my face at that point, because Stoick stared at me quizzically and asked, "Whit's wrong with ye? Ye look like you've been told to eat toe jam." I shook my head and looked away. "Let's just say Toothless decided to elaborate on the situation. Are we absolutely sure they're here to hurt?" That earned a snort from Toothless. "Why else should they come here?" Hiccup queried. "They hate us." I held up my hands. "Hey, I'm new here. Remember that I come from a world where even bitter enemies usually try to make a deal before blowing heads off." I turned to Stoick. "Though, to be safe, shouldn't someone be sent out to at least see what their intentions are?" Stoick nodded, but shook his head. "That would be fine if it wasn't the dragons they were after. If they shot at the messenger, we would lose one more man, and be that much less prepared."

"I could volunteer," I replied. "After all, I have more than one way to dodge death now, and slow them down if need be." Stoick looked at me with a shocked expression. "You would do that? Fer people you barely know?" I nodded. "I know you guys better than you think. Besides, I'm stuck here for a couple more days, what else do I have to do?" Stoick sighed, then waved a hand. "Alright, but I'm not going to send you out without backup. Anyone willing to help Hawken out?" he yelled.

"I'll go," said a voice behind us. We turned to see Astrid sitting on her Nadder, Thorn. "Not much else to do for excitement around here anyways," she continued. Stoick nodded. "Alright, you two will fly out there tomorrow morning to see what their intentions are, for sure. As for right now, everyone needs to get off to bed. I have a feelin' we're going to need our energy tomorrow."

A good call that was, anyways. Night was falling, and there wasn't a chance for a spying mission that night. As everyone headed off to their houses, I told Hiccup that I was going to stay in the hall for a bit. He just nodded and left, but Toothless came and sat down beside me. I looked over at him. "Aren't you going to go with Hiccup?" He shook his head. ::Hiccup can take care of himself, at least for the walk back to the house. It isn't that far. Besides,:: he said, looking down at me, I was wanting to ask you something.:: "Shoot," I said. ::What?:: "It means ask your question."

Toothless shifted a bit, then spoke. ::Why are you really risking

your life for this village here? he said. I mean, most people here don't even trust you still, and a few have treated you rather horribly. I wasn't exactly nice to you at first, either.::: I laughed. "Oh come on, you haven't figured it out yet?" ::No, how could I?:: "It's the reason I was given the ability to turn dragon in the first place: to use my newfound powers to help other people out. I don't care how corny that sounds, it's true." I looked him right in the eyes. "An enemy to those who haven't truly done bad on purpose and known it is an enemy to what I believe, to God. Therefore, I am going to find a way to stop them, make them change their minds if I can." Toothless snorted.::: Good luck with that.::: I glared at him.

"Besides, I'm not one to just leave my friends to fend for themselves." Toothless raised an eyebrow. ::Oh? And who do you call friends here?::: This time I raised an eyebrow. "Really, is it not that obvious? I would most definitely call Hiccup, you, and likely Astrid friends."

At this, Toothless smirked. ::You mean you like her? Maybe I should tell Hiccup.::: I gave him a withering glare. "Now hold on just one minute. I said she's a friend, and not even as close a friend as you and Hiccup. If I had feelings for her, then what kind of feelings would I have for you? Don't even think about going down that path." ::Oh, right.::: That shut him up.

"Come on," I said, standing up and heading out the doors of the hall. "Let's get back to Hiccup's house." As I walked, Toothless decided to work out his wings a bit. Even at this stage, he was able to glide short distances, though I could see him wincing in pain every now and then. When he landed next to me, I noticed the cuts were nearly healed over, only a few scabs here and there. "You nearly able to fly again?" I asked. ::Yes, probably only a day or two before I can do so without any pain., he said. Which reminds meâ€|.:::

Suddenly I felt something long and scaly sweep under my feet, knocking me forward. I rolled onto my back, only to get tackled by Toothless, who stood on top of me and gave me a big wet lick up the side of my face. ::That's for when we met,::: he said, smirking. "Yeah, yeah, yeah," I said, trying to push him off and wipe my face at the same time. "We're even now, so can you get off me?" He stepped to the side, and I stood up. "You do realize I'm sleeping on the same floor as you?" I asked. ::What, you're going to try and get me back?::: Toothless said in mock concern. "Well, you did go a bit over the top in trying to drown me there." Toothless just gave a toothless smirk. "Oh, fine, I'll leave it be." With that, we "quietly" made our way back to the house. As I laid down to go to sleep, I thought about what was going to happen tomorrow. I had my work cut out for me, I knew that, but little did I know how persistent some people can be when trying to exact revenge.

## 11. Chapter 11: Battle

\*\*A/N-Over 1,000 visits already! I feel loved :D\*\*

\*\*More of an action-packed chapter here, though it still pales in comparison of what will come. Also, if anyone has any questions relating to anything at all in the story (timing, characters, me, etc.) feel free to ask! I will try to answer as best as I can as long as it doesn't give away anything later on in the story.\*\*

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><p>Two Worlds Collide</p>

## Chapter 11: Battle

I woke up on day four of my now only slightly reluctant stay on Berk, remembering that I had a job to do. I had to go and find out whether or not the Clubswingers (who should really find a better name) were here on revenge, like everyone thought, or if they were here for a different reason. I got up and headed out of Hiccup's house, followed by Toothless, since Hiccup wasn't up yet, and met up with Astrid and Thorn near the Mead Hall.

"You two ready?" I asked. Like I needed to: I was met with a unanimous "Of course!" "Okay, okay, let's get going then." I had left my weapons in Hiccup's house, figuring I could always come back for them, and they would slow me down. Now, as Astrid saddled up on Thorn, I focused on a new image, a picture somewhat like Toothless, but at a size nearly three times larger, with wings like a Timberjack. I felt the changes take place at lightning speed, my body stretching out to nearly 60 feet in length, and my swept back tail and crests appeared. My head formed into an elongated version of a Night Fury's, and from my back sprouted massive, razor sharp wings nearly 60 feet long each. Of course, like always, my own characteristic swept-back tail and crests appeared as well. Astrid stared up at me in amazement, and Thorn only slightly less so, since she knew about the gift more than Astrid did. "I don't think that's a dragon in the books," Astrid commented. I laughed and shook my head. "No, no it's not. Just another surprise for everyone to see."

I spread my wings and lifted myself off the ground in one powerful burst, followed by the two girls. "So what exactly are you planning?" Astrid queried. I pointed with one claw toward the ships visible only a couple of miles out. "I'll head down toward the ships, and you stay up and behind me, in case they shoot. If everything is fine, you come down and do the talking with me. If not, Thorn can take you back to Berk and alert everyone. I can change to something more water adapted and disappear, Thorn can't." I looked out and focused on the ships again, trying to count them. There were at least twelve, and all were barely 2 minute's flight out.

As we neared the leading ship, I turned to Astrid again. "Alright, remember, if all is well, you talk and get back to Stoick. If they shoot, head back and alert the village, while I try and slow them down somewhat. Got it?" She and Thorn nodded "Got it." They swung back above me, close enough to hear me if needed, but out of range of danger if need be as well. I began lowering altitude, and closed the distance on the first ship.

Once we were a couple thousand feet away, I saw the lead ship begin to come alive. They had noticed us. As we got closer, I spotted a group of Vikings hauling out what looked like a harpoon launcher and swerving it to aim in our direction. I twisted my head and yelled back at Astrid. "They're shooting!" Thorn immediately flared her wings and spun around, heading for Berk. At least we knew their intentions now. Meanwhile, I waited until the launcher was pointed directly at me, and watched it fire. The spear screamed through the air toward me, and as it neared, I banked to the side and grabbed the shaft, making it look like they had hit me. Then I dove nose first

toward the ocean below, transforming into the sea dragon I had become to rescue Hiccup the day before. It must have been interesting, to say the least, for the opposing tribe to watch what they probably thought was a dragon deflating, turning into a snake with legs. As I hit the water, I released the spear and watched it sink, and aced myself in the direction of the ships. My plan was simple: the dragon I had become didn't breathe fire, but a far more solid and, in some ways, destructive substance, strong enough to throw any ship off kilter. When I neared the lead ship, I changed my color to match the water exactly, and perked my ears up out of the water.

"I think we killed it!" I heard. "Maybe this'll be an easy victory." "I should hope so," another voice replied, "it's about time they got what's coming."

That was all I needed to hear. I dove back down and under the ship, and took aim at the bow. I felt the cold well up in my throat, and let it loose. The white stream shot through the water, creating an instant path of ice, and hit the ship. I watched as even the small amount of fuel I had used began to coat the entire bow with a foot-thick sheet of ice, and I heard the water-soaked wood begin to creak and crackle as it froze as well. As the lead ship began to veer off course due to the unbalanced weight, I snaked up to the next closest ship and did the same.

Once every boat had a thorough coating of ice, I shot out toward Berk. But I didn't swim all the way back. Once I was sure everyone would have a good view of me, I powered up into the air, stretching out a pair of powerful wings and a long, muscular tail. After that, I cast one last glance at the armada, and shot back to Berk. Behind me, the ships were a temporary mess, and wouldn't be moving for a good hour, especially in the already cold water.

Back in the middle of the village, near the chief's house, I found all of the Hooligans gathered, with Hiccup and his father, along with Astrid and their dragons, at the center of the group. As I neared, Hiccup saw me and pointed. Everyone got out of the way, and I landed, changing into the original half-dragon form I first found myself in. "Well? What exactly do they want?" Stoick asked. "They're here to fight," I said simply. "Oh, of course," was the general reply. "They thought that they killed me," I continued, "but I left their ships temporarily hindered. We might have at best two hours before they reach the bay."

Almost right away everyone was ready to fight. Everywhere I looked there was a weapon of some kind. Axes, swords, bolas, and out in the bay the catapults were all being readied for battle. Many of the Vikings were on their dragons, practicing destroying targets. No matter where I looked, though, I could not find one certain pair: Hiccup and Toothless seemed to have disappeared. I flew across the entire village, but they were nowhere to be seen.

Finally, as I began to head down toward the bay where the harbor was, I spotted a shock of black at the top of a hill overlooking the bay. I swung around in that direction, and sure enough, Toothless was standing at the top of the bluff on the cliff. As I neared, I saw Hiccup sitting next to him. I swooped down and flared my wings to land. "What're you two doing up here?" I asked. Hiccup shrugged. "This is our assignment," Hiccup said. "Since me and my dad don't want to risk Toothless getting reinjured in the battle, we're going

to blast the shipboard weapons from up here. Though I think it's a lot because my dad wants me out of danger."

I must have had a look of guilt on my face because Toothless chimed in. ::We don't blame you anymore Hawken,:: he said. ::I'll admit I overreacted some too.:: I smiled. "Well, thanks." I looked out across the bay. "Well, if you're going to be firing from up here, try not to hit me." Hiccup looked up, confusion written on his face. "What do you mean? Are you going to be on the boats or something?" he asked. I nodded. "I'm half dragon, remember? I'm better able to defend myself and fight than anyone else here. Besides," I continued, "while I'm here, I might as well help out." Hiccup laughed. "Alright, just don't get yourself killed. You're really a good friend, and I don't want our problems getting rid of you."

I stood there, speechless for a minute. "You-you really think I'm a friend?" I asked. Hiccup nodded. "Well, uh, thank you," was all I managed.

Suddenly below we heard a horn blast, and looked down below. The first ship was heading into the harbor, well within fighting range. Strangely, I noticed it wasn't the original lead ship. Not that it mattered, as I watched the first catapult boulders and spears fly. The dragons and their riders were also getting up into the air. "Time to go," I said, and turned toward the edge of the cliff.

I focused on a picture of a Night Fury, and watched the changes take place. Once I was fully dragon, I launched myself into the air, and climbed higher and higher up, until I was well over a thousand feet up. As I curved over the docks, I saw the first Clubswinger ship pull into the docks, though most of its war machines were now destroyed. I focused on the third ship out, realizing it was the original leading ship, and continued to climb upward. Once I decided I was high enough, I folded my wings in and dropped, holding my weapons close. The wind rushing past began to whistle, and as I opened my mouth slightly, the infamous whistling screech formed, causing the Vikings below to begin to search hurriedly all around. As I readied a blast for a spear launcher, I herd them begin to yell.

"NIGHT FURY! GET DOWN!"

I ignited the fuel in my mouth, sending a blinding indigo fireball hurtling at near supersonic speeds toward the spear launcher. The resulting explosion threw the Vikings manning the machine in all directions, and the machine itself half-vaporized. I blew past, enjoying the sight of the Vikings on the boat throwing themselves to the deck to avoid me.

I repeated the maneuver five times altogether to eliminate the rest of the machines on the ship, then turned and aimed for the front of the deck. Everyone on the boat dove out of the way, some even overboard, as they thought I was going to blast the ship itself. Instead, I flared my wings, shading out the deck, and landed. I waited until I had everyone's attention, which wasn't long, as it's not every day you have a Night Fury land on your ship, and began to transform myself back to human. A collective gasp went up, and a big man with a cloak, who I guessed might have been the chief, stepped forward.

"What in Thor's name are you?" he spat. I laughed. "Actually, a whole

different God, but that's beside the point." I pulled my whip off of my shoulder, and pointed it at the man. "The real point here is, I am a friend of the Viking tribe you are attacking, and I am planning on defending them." The man pulled out a sword nearly half the size of me. "I don't know about you, but they're our enemies. If yer their friend, then I plan to do the same thing we're going to do to them to you!" I shrugged. "It makes no difference to me, I will fight anyone who touches me or my friends, no matter what you threaten to do. Now, you and your crew have two choices," I drawled, pointing an accusing finger at the motley crew behind the big man. "You can either pack up and get the rest of you ships to leave, plus accept that obvious fact that your dragon fighting days are over, or you can face me." The man laughed. "You?!" he guffawed. "Ye'll be nothin' more'n a splatter on the deck when I'm through with ye." I opened my arms wide. "Go ahead."

With that, he lifted up his sword and swung it down at me. I more than easily dodged, and as he stood back up straight, I uncoiled my whip and lashed it out, wrapping the end tightly around the hilt, and yanked back. The sword was wrenched out of the Viking's hands and into mine. I casually looked it over, then tossed it over my shoulder and off the ship. "What next?" I asked amusingly. "Why you little-!" the Viking charged at me, and I jumped up and over him, flipping over in the process. As I landed behind him, I spun to face him again and slid my own sword out of its scabbard. As the man turned toward me again, I swung the sword into the side of his head, knocking him out cold. He fell to the deck with a moan. I slid my sword away and looked at the rest of the crew. "So," I said almost venomously, "who's next?"

As it turns out, Vikings are extremely stubborn, even to a fault. I ended up fighting almost everyone on board, knocking most of them unconscious, while giving others the opportunity to enjoy a refreshing swim to shore, until only about five Vikings were left conscious on the ship. They finally got the idea. Unfortunately, there were still around 10 ships left to deal with, and each ship was more hardheaded than the last.

It took about five hours for the battle to finally wind down, and for me and the dragon riders to incapacitate the last ship, but of course, there was also plenty of fighting still on land. Vikings are nowhere near as averse to bloodshed as I am, and so what happened on the shores of the island I'll leave undescribed. From their vantage point on the bluff, Hiccup and Toothless helped out by taking out the largest catapults and harpoon guns, each exploding in brilliant orange and indigo.

By the time the battle ended, it was beginning to darken, and the living captives were taken to the Mead Hall to be chained up, since there were too many to put into the Kill Ring cells (thanks to yours truly). As it turned out, the first Clubswinger I had taken down was, in fact, their chief, so he and Stoick got to have a very heated discussion over the conditions of surrender and release. Halfway through it, me and Toothless were forced to pull the two apart. Luckily, Hiccup and I were able to sit in and helped form an agreement between the two tribes. The Clubswingers, begrudgingly, would end their killing of dragons (or I'd be on their doorstep sooner or later again), and give Berk a treasure chest's worth of gold they had collected over past raids and trades. In return, Berk would release them, and open up trade with them again, as well as try

to help patch up relationships with other tribes. Amusingly, the tribe the Clubswingers wanted to return to trading with the most was the Bog Burglars (typical guys; always after the women). Big surprise there, thought Camicazi continued to stay un-dated.

Finally, the Clubswingers left on the boats that weren't too battered and destroyed, and everyone celebrated the new truce in the Mead Hall. Well, everyone, that is, except for me, Astrid, and Hiccup. We were having a different kind of celebration. It was likely the last night I would have to stay, and the two of them were planning on finding out as much as possible about my world before I had to leave.

## 12. Chapter 12: Final Night

\*\*A/N-the next few chapters are going to be a lot slower, what with adapting to the new lifestyle and the characters getting to know each other. Though there will still be some action and hopefully some humor, since the meeting of two so-very-different places could never happen smoothly...\*\*

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><p>Two Worlds Collide</p>

### Chapter 12: Final Night

"Alright, you're probably going to disappear for quite a while before we see you again, so we want to hear everything."

It was right around sunset, the evening after the battle with the Clubswingers, and while everyone else was in the Mead Hall celebrating by getting drunk (Vikings, what can you expect?), Hiccup and Astrid had managed to drag me away to an unused watchtower, where we had built a fire. As Hiccup had said just a moment ago, they were planning on finding out about every little possible thing they could about where I came from before I left. It would be who knows how long before I came back (if I could come back).

"Well," I began, "what do you want to know first?" Astrid leaned back in her seat. "How about explaining to us a little more what you said when you came here." I raised an eyebrow in question. "Meaning?" "You said we were from something called a 'movie'. Explain that." I laughed and nodded. "Alright, very well. A movie is part of our technology that we have in our world. The most basic form would be what is called a video tape. It's a string of thousands of pictures put together,. Each one slightly different from the last, and they're projected at a high speed onto something so it looks like the pictures are moving." Hiccup snorted. "Isn't it a bit tedious to have to squint at all those little pictures?" I laughed again and shook my head. "Like I said, they're projected onto something. Usually it's a television, which shows the movie by forming the pictures with thousands of tiny dots of light."

"Alright, how do you make the pictures move fast enough?" Astrid asked. "The same way just about everything else works in my world," I said. "Everything runs on electricity." "Whoa, whoa, whoa, hold on," Hiccup said, raising up his hands, "you mean to tell me that people in your world can harness lightning?" I smirked. "Electricity

can be produced other ways. Lightning is static electricity on overload. We produce electricity in far smaller amounts, and it can be put to work making light, heat, movement, cooling things down, and most importantly, building and destroying things."

Astrid perked up here. "Destroy things? Like a weapon?" I waved my hands around a bit. "Sometimes it builds weapons, but mostly it runs machines to clear out ground for farming or living, or to clear out other buildings and such. That's just the base line, too." Astrid nodded. "Well, you mentioned weapons, and I want to hear about those, too." I smirked. "Big surprise." She just gave me a deadpan look. "I understand the concept of whips and swords, but yours are unlike anything I've ever seen."

At this point I stood up and un-shouldered my whip. "What's to know about this?" She shrugged. "I've never learned exactly how the whip works. I mean, it's a leather rope, how does it make such a loud noise?" My face formed an 'oh, I see' look. "You mean this." Quick as lightning, I uncurled my whip, threw it back behind me, and snapped it forward. Hiccup and Astrid were expecting it, but both of them jumped as the gunshot crack echoed across the village below. "That noise is produced by this," I said, curling up the whip and thumbing the thicker tip, "moving at a speed faster than the speed of sound. It creates a compression of the sound waves traveling through the air, and the sound waves expand out all at the same time, creating a loud BOOM! It's the same principle as lightning and thunder." Hiccup looked at the weapon. "And that's something your world has had for over 800 years longer than us?" I smiled. Astrid shook her head. "Alright, what about the sword? Hiccup here is impressive at smithing, almost as good as Gobber, but even those two have never created something that doesn't tarnish at least a bit after 5 days. I've seen you use it, too, and it doesn't bend at all!"

I pulled out my sword and handed it to her, so she could look it over. "The secret is really none at all, just an alloy your time period hasn't come up with yet, stainless steel. It takes months of water exposure to make any rust on it, and unless it's heated to over 1,000 degrees, it's one of the strongest metals in my time. We make everything out of it." I pointed to the blade of the sword. "You'll notice what looks like lines going along the length of it, too. There's an Asian technique of folding the metal when making the sword, so that layer upon layer of metal meshes together, holding it all in place. Some swords have over 2,000 folds." Astrid's eyes widened, and she looked at Hiccup. "Alright, I'll try it," he groaned. Astrid smiled and gave him a kiss on the cheek. Then she handed the sword back.

"We've had swords forever," she said, "so if you're as advanced as you say you are, then you must have weapons even more powerful." I nodded slipping the sword back into its scabbard. "Well, probably the most common is the gun." Hiccup raised an eyebrow. "Gun? Never heard of it." "Well, of course not, they haven't been invented around here yet," I drawled. "They consist pretty much of a handle and trigger, and a hollow tube with a metal bullet inside. You pull the trigger, which ignites a sort of explosive powder, which blasts the bullet down the tube and out at whatever you're shooting at." I turned and looked at the seat I was sitting on. "See that?" Hiccup nodded, and Astrid just raised an eyebrow. "What about it?" she asked. "Where I come from, many guns would go from not even denting that to making a nice round pockmark, but your average killing gun could put a bullet

into that bench with enough force to imbed it more than halfway through."

A look of horror wormed its way onto Hiccup's face, and he looked at me. "You don't own one of these yourself, do you?" I looked at Astrid, who had a bit of frightened interest on her face still. "I do have some guns that could kill, but my father owns things that may be able to do that sort of damage." "I'll make sure never to anger your father then," Hiccup said. I laughed. "He's not a killer, but I still wouldn't piss him off." I shifted in my seat. "Of course, even that's not the worst." A unanimous "What?!" arose from the two Vikings. I nodded, and both put looks of uncertainty and nervousness on their faces. "There are things like machine guns, which can fire hundreds of bullets, or rounds, in a minute. Others launch small explosive devices. Then there's the mother of destructive weapons, the bombs." Astrid turned her head to look at me, then Hiccup. "Bombs?" she said. "Yeah," I continued. "Most work with chemicals that are naturally unstable or that will explode upon contact with other chemicals, and even those can put 20 foot or larger craters into the ground. Some, however, work on nuclear power."

I bent down and rubbed my fingers across the wooden floor, picking up some dust. I held my fingers out to the Vikings. "See the dust on my hand?" They nodded. "Take one grain of this dust, and imagine something a thousandth the size." Hiccup's eyes widened. "Things exist at that size?" "Yes," I said, "and at that level, those particles are referred to as at the atomic level. Particles of that size are the basis for everything we see around us, and this is the level nuclear power works on. Either you have nuclear fission, or fusion. Fission is where we take energy and break atoms apart, releasing huge amounts of energy. Fusion is where two atoms are fused together, releasing energy as well. Most nuclear bombs today use fission. A single atom of a gas called hydrogen is collapsed, breaking it apart and releasing energy." Hiccup held up his hand. "Hold on, you mean to say a single atom can kill?" I nodded. "Let me finish and I'll tell you how. The energy released by the one atom causes a chain reaction that builds the energy up exponentially, until reactions are being made in thousands of pounds of material, all within only a second or two. This reaction converts most of that material into energy, millions of degrees of heat energy, radiation energy, and physical force. These things can leave craters over a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile wide, and many feet deep." I tuned and pointed to the village of Berk below us. "If a single hydrogen bomb were to detonate over the village, everything within one to five miles would be instantly turned to vapor, and the supersonic shock wave could level the forest for a good ten miles out."

For a few minutes, there was no sound on the watchtower. Finally Astrid spoke up. "So, these weapons can destroy an island the size of Berk?" I nodded. Hiccup looked at me. "And your world created these," he stated. I sighed. "Sadly, yes. It was in defense against attack from other nations, during a massive world war. But the actual imminent destruction of the bombs isn't the worst part." Hiccup's eyes, if it's even possible, became wider. "If that's not, then what is?" "I spoke of some of the bomb's energy becoming radiation. Radiation can cause hundreds of diseases, and complicate many more, and spreads from the blast site over hundreds of miles, contaminating everything. Nothing can grow, anything touched is likely to die or live a life full of medical problems, and worse, the effects last for ages." I closed my eyes and sighed. "Only two of these bombs were

ever used on people, over 70 years ago, and those people who survived are still feeling the effects in the area today." I opened my eyes and looked at the two. Hiccup spoke up. "That long? That's longer than most Vikings even live." I nodded. "Are these bombs still around?" Astrid asked. "Unfortunately, and none are even as small as the ones used 70 years ago. Many are over 20 times the size, and the combined power of all that are in the world could destroy the earth 5 times over. Luckily, so many people fear the outcome of using them that none have been used since that world war." Astrid nodded. "Let's hope none are used again." I sighed. "I hope not. But even if we don't wipe each other of the planet with weapons, my world is being depleted of what we need to survive at an impossible rate.

"There are 7 billion people in my world—" at this, the Vikings gasped again, "-and we go through enough resources each day to cover this island twice. Plus, what we use pollutes land, air, and water, and everything just seems to be going downhill." I looked out at the now dark island's coast, in the direction of the thickest visible forest. "You guys still have plenty of time before you need to worry about all that, but the earlier something is stopped, the better." I looked down at myself. "I hope there's still time for where I live, and something I can do about it." Hiccup looked straight at me. "Maybe we can help." I laughed. "My own family won't be able to believe what they're seeing when I show them what I am now, let alone the rest of the world coming to terms with this one existing. But, maybe one day. The Mystique said I was given this gift from God, so it's likely I'm meant to try and keep peace in both our worlds now, and keeping my world from destroying itself is a good way to keep peace."

Hiccup stood up and stretched. "Well, let's see if we can get off of such depressing topics, shall we?" Astrid stood up and nodded. "Too late. I'm already going to have nightmares from this. I shouldn't have asked about the weapons." I shrugged. "You would've found out sooner or later, might as well be sooner." "A-anyways," Hiccup interrupted, "I was looking over Toothless earlier, and the cuts are barely even scars now. He should be able to fly right away in the morning tomorrow." I stood up and nodded, and we all started for the stairs. "I hope so. I like it here, but my parents are probably freaking out right now. I can't even say what my sister must feel like." Astrid turned to me. "You have a sister?" I nodded. "And you're probably going to meet her in the future."

We reached the base of the tower. I looked over my shoulder and the new appendages I had kept on. Astrid put a hand on my shoulder. "I'm sure you'll be able to break it to them somehow," she said, "though I wouldn't suggest waiting too long." Hiccup looked at me. "You will come back, right?" I gave him a deadpan look, then walked up to him and gave him a soft slap on the back of the head. "No, I'm just going to disappear, never to be seen again. What do you think, I'd just abandon all my new friends?" Astrid snickered behind me. I turned to her. "Besides, someone's got to keep all you Vikings in line."

Astrid parted ways with us there, heading back to her house, and Hiccup and I continued up the hill to his house. We both nearly got knocked over by Toothless, but were able to get inside and to our respective beds without any major injury. As I lay down, I smiled at the thought of going home, but there was also that one big problem: how in the world was I going to break the news of all this to my family when I got back?

### 13. Chapter 13: Coming Home

\*\*A/N-Finally, we get to return to my house! :) Also, we're about a third of the way through this first book, so you can start to expect time to move faster, and events begin to pile up more and more. Plenty of downtime here, but there will be plenty of action and antics later on!\*\*

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><p>Chapter 13</p>

Heading Home

Sleep. What a wonderful thing.

That is, until I found myself being tackled off my makeshift bed by something very large and heavy. "What theâ€œ!!" I began, and then my face was covered in dragon slobber. "Augh! Toothless! Get off me!"

I shoved him off and sat up, wiping the thick spit off my face. "Why in the world did you do that? I was comfy!" I snapped. Turning around, I saw Hiccup laughing next to the table. "I see you're part of this too, huh?" Hiccup shrugged. "If that's what you think, fine."

I looked back at Toothless, and saw he had his riding gear on. "Oh, so that's why you're so excited." ::Yeah, we already went out, but we didn't want to wake you before, since we weren't sure if I could fully fly yet.:: I gave him a deadpan look. "So when you found out you could, you decided to use me as a living trampoline?" Looking back at Hiccup, I asked, "What time is it, anyway?" "About mid morning. You slept rather late, surprisingly, considering what day it is," he replied. "You get to go home, remember?"

That woke me up. I stood up and stretched. "How the heck could I forget? My parents are probably freaking out and tearing the city apart right now." We laughed. "What about when, you know, they find out?" Hiccup said, gesturing to the pair of wings I still had folded behind me. I sighed. "They'll probably freak out even more, so I'll let things calm down a while before I break the news." Hiccup nodded, and turned and headed for the door. "Well let's not waste any more time. The sooner you're back home, the better. And the sooner you can come back."

We headed out the door, and Hiccup jumped up with practiced speed onto Toothless. "Alright, follow me." I focused on my newfound flying instincts (that's the best I can describe it), and lifted myself into the air. We gained height, and turned to head slightly to the northwest, past Hiccup's house and in the direction of a peninsula on one side of the island. "So it was this way," I muttered. Hiccup looked over at me. "What?" I shook my head. "Oh, nothing. I was just thinking out loud. The movie never explained where the cove was." He nodded. "Ah, okay."

We continued our flight in relative silence. After only a few minutes, the cove came into view. "Alright, now exactly where near the cove was this, uh, 'time-rip' thing that you came from?" Hiccup

asked as we glided down. I looked around and saw that we were on the side of the cove with the ground entrance and the rock ledges. "On the other side, I think," I said, "opposite the ledges down below." We glided across the top of the cove, landing on the other side. Looking down, I nodded. "Yeah I remember this view."

We started walking along the edge, checking through the trees to catch a glimpse of anything unusual. Luckily, it was barely 30 seconds later when I spotted the glow, in a small clearing off to our right and hemmed in by wall-to-wall trees. "There," I said, pointing. "Well, that's certainly never been there before," Hiccup said, gesturing to the wall of trees. "Trees never grow that thick anywhere on the island."

As we got closer, the shimmering-type light became more apparent, and a low, humming vibration could barely be felt. "You feel that?" I asked. Hiccup raised an eyebrow and shook his head. "No, what?" ::Must be something only dragons can feel,:: Toothless commented. ::We can feel and hear things at much lower frequencies than people.:: I smirked at the hint of arrogance in his voice, and shook my head. I reached out toward the glow with my hand, and just like when I first went through, my hand blurred. "Well it's working," I said, turning to the two. "Alright, I promise to come visit if this still stays open every few days, okay?" Hiccup stood up straight, and Toothless sat down so as to look me in the eye. I held out my hand, and Hiccup took it.

As we shook, we both smiled. "I'll see you around," I said, and Hiccup nodded. "You better," he replied, smirking. I then turned to Toothless, giving him a rub on the head and a scratch behind the ear. "See ya around," I said. ::You'd better return and hold to your promise,:: Toothless rumbled back, ::or I'll personally brave whatever's in your world to drag you back for a visit.::

I laughed, and stepped back toward the portal. Taking one last wave, I said, "So long for now," and stepped through. Hiccup, Toothless, and the forest faded, and in their place, my own backyard, thank goodness, began shimmering into view. Slowly, I stepped out onto the rocks, and turned around to see the light still there. As I watched, the shimmering slowly stopped, locking in place as a solid glow. Looking down, I also saw a grayish tail and a pair of wings.

Oops," I muttered, and focused on removing them. Once fully human, save for the scale spiral on my forehead, I looked over at my untended garden, and stepped by and onto the grass. Looking up at my house, I smiled.

"HAWKEN!"

#### 14. Chapter 14: Back Again

\*\*A/N-Short chapter, I know, but it is what it is. For those who are working through the story and still waiting for the writing style to get better, it should start getting there now, too, as I began to gain experience from here on out. And as always, reviews are appreciated, I like to know what my readers think!\*\*

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><p>Chapter 14: Back Again<p>

I watched as my little sister came tearing out of the house, not caring as she tripped on the steps at the end of the deck, and launched herself at me. "I was so scared!" she sobbed, and I looked down at her to see her crying. "Hey, hey, it's alright," I said, stroking her hair, "I'm back now." "Where'd you go?" she asked. I smiled. "I can't tell you that yet." She looked up at me, curiosity and annoyance replacing her crying eyes. "Why not?" I shook my head. "Because I am not prepared to yet," I said, picking her up over my head and spinning her around. "But I've got a good story to tell."

"Hawken?" I put Holly down and turned back around to the deck. My mom was stepping out of the door, worried tears in her eyes. I ran up to her and hugged her. "I'm sorry I scared you," I said, looking at her, "but I promise it wasn't my doing." "Oh, I know that," she said a bit sarcastically, "I'm just happy you're back. What happened? Were you kidnapped?" I sighed and stepped back, scratching the back of my head. "Uh, yes and no, sort of. It's kind of complicated." My mom stepped back and motioned toward the house. "Well, it's a long day still. We can talk about it inside. Are you hungry?"

The next hour was spent with me being hugged and hung on by Holly, my mom calling the police and telling them I was fine, my dad coming home from looking for me, and, unfortunately but expectedly, Holly pestering me about where I was. Eventually my parents started asking about what happened, but as anyone could imagine, I was nowhere near ready to lay the truth on them. I simply said I wasn't ready to tell anyone, and luckily for me they didn't push for details too hard. However, I had to keep my wits about me to keep the scales on my forehead hidden. There's no telling what would happen if they were spotted.

After about two hours I managed to escape the random embraces and the pesky sister, and checked on all my belongings. Luckily everything was in place and fine. My parents actually kept an eye on all my hobbies, and no plants were dead! There were even a few special surprises for me, but I won't bore you with the obsessive details.

As I went about putting everything in order in my room, Holly came peeking her head in. "Hawken, are you busy?" I smiled and turned around. "Yes, why?" "Are you ready to tell us what happened?" I shook my head. "I really just want to get settled back in right now, okay?" She put on a pouty face and crossed her arms. "Please tell me?" I sighed. "Patience, not pestering, is rewarded, Holly."

It didn't help. Until dinner, Holly continued to pester me. Lucky for me, but not really necessary, we went out to dinner, and I got to pick where, simply because my parents were happy to have me back. It was great, but did make me feel guilty. After all, I ended up having a good time where I disappeared to. When we got back home, I told everyone I'd reveal the story the next morning, and disappeared into my room.

As I lay in bed, watching bands of pitch black scales run up and down my arm, my mind turned over what I was going to say. Would they freak out? Would they understand? What will go wrong? What can be good about a talk like this? These questions continued to turn in my mind

even as I fell into a fitful sleep.

## 15. Chapter 15: Time to Explain, Again

\*\*A/N- Hope you're all enjoying the quick updates, but unfortunately the week is here and I will probably be slowing down again until the next weekend. However, I still like to hear what the readers think, so please review, and all guests remember: I can't reply if you don't sign in! I've had a couple reviews I would have loved to reply to, but they were guests, so I have no way to do so.\*\*

\*\*In any case, on with the story...\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 15: Time to Explain, Again<p>

I woke up early the next morning and made myself breakfast long before anyone else was up. I was not looking forward to the chaos that was surely to follow soon after the talk, but it was something that needed to be done.

By the time everyone else in my family was having their breakfast, I was completely dressed and sitting in my chair silently. I decided sooner or later it would come into play, so I didn't try to cover up the spiral mark on my forehead. However, my hair did that well enough anyway. It wasn't long, though, before Holly spoke up.

"Hawken, exactly why don't you have your glasses on?" I blinked and looked up, not having been paying attention. "Oh, um, that's, uh part of the story," I said, fidgeting a little. By now everyone was just about done, with breakfast, and my father stood up to carry his plate to the dishwasher. "Well, I think we've all been waiting long enough, Hawken," he said, and my mom and sister nodded in agreement. "It's time you told us just what happened." I sighed and nodded. "Yes, I know. Um, can we go sit in the living room? This may be a while."

After about two minutes, my family was sitting on the big couch, and I was sitting in a chair in the middle of the room. I leaned forward a bit and rubbed my hands together in nervousness. "Okay, the first thing I need to explain is what I found the day I went missing," I began. I pointed out toward my garden. "Over by my garden, see the rocks there?" They nodded. "Well, if you walk out there, there's a sort of, eh, light that can be seen floating above the rocks. When I found it, it was rippling like water, like it wasn't going to be there long. It's as still as stone now, but in any case, I was curious." "So, was it some sort of reflection?" My mom asked. I shook my head. "No, not at all. I believe it's a sort of dimensional rip, a hole in space and time. Over the past few days, I have become certain it's God's doing, and I'll explain why in a minute. But of course I was curious, and went through."

My mom nodded in realization. "That would explain why you turned up yesterday in the back yard, but this is a bit hard to believe." I sighed and nodded. "I understand why, but let me continue. What I found on the other side, while exciting, would shock just about anyone. Holly, you'll like this, but as it turns out, there's a movie, of all things, come to life on the other side of the rip."

Holly's eyes widened. "What movie?" she asked. I smiled and leaned forward. "A movie with Vikings and flying reptiles. Take a guess." She sat there for a couple moments, confused, but then her eyes lit up. "You mean How to train your Dragon is real?" she practically squealed. I smiled and nodded.

My father was getting a bit frustrated. "That's impossible," he said. "It's bad enough that you disappeared for 5 days and no one knew where you were, but you come back and make up a story like this to get away with it?" I glared at him. "I'm not making it up." "And you expect me to believe that you found your favorite movie on the other side of some sort of crazy time rip?" I nodded, but the shook my head a little bit. "Well, not exactly the movie, a couple years have passed since the first one, but that's beside the point. That world is really there, and I happened to stumble into it."

This time my mother held up her hand. "Do you have any proof of this?" she asked. I gestured out toward the portal. "Well, you can always go take a look for yourself if you like, but yes, I do have other proofs as well." "Like what?" my father asked. I sighed and decided it was time. "I'm amazed none of you have seen it yet, but here goes." I lifted up my hair, revealing the spiral of whitish scales on my forehead.

My parents gasped. "What is that?" my dad asked. "Some sort of rash?" "Hawken, we need to treat that," my mom continued. "It could be dangerous." I shook my head and held up my hands. "No, no, you've got it all wrong. It's not a rash or disease, and there's no way I know of that it's ever coming off. It's part of me." "Where did it come from?" Holly piped up. "A dragon, sort of. It's the mark of a gift I have, a gift set in motion in that world centuries ago by God." My dad frowned. "How does a spiral mark out a gift?" he asked. I lifted up my hair again. "Look closely. What does it look like it's made of?" Everyone leaned forward. "Scales," Holly said. I nodded. "This is going to be a big shock, so please don't freak out," I said, and stood up and moved the chair out of the way.

"Watch closely," I said, and pointed to my eyes. I focused on a picture of my usual form, and watched as colors changed and everything became sharper, depth perception and detail increased as my eyes changed from human to gray and reptilian. My sister gasped, and my mom squealed a bit, while my dad's eyes widened in shock and amazement.. "I'm not done," I said, and focused next on my skin. Colors started changing on my face and arms, as a scale pattern flowed over my skin and became three-dimensional. Next came the claws from my hands, and then I brought on the main changes. First my tail sprouted out, expanding like a hyperactive vine, and the tailfin appeared at the end. Down my back the row of spines appeared, and I raised them to full height. Last of all, I felt my wings sprout and fan out from my back, reaching from one side of the room to the other. "Like I said," I drawled, "I'm not quite the same anymore." "Cool!" Holly yelled.

THUMP!

I looked down at the ground to see my mom on the floor. She had fainted dead away.

"Mom!" I yelled, and bent down to pick her up off the floor. I removed my wings and tail, as well as the claws, and picked her up

back on the couch. "What happened to you?" my dad asked from next to me. I looked at him. "I was given a gift, as I said before. Not exactly a normal gift, as you saw, but still," I said. I focused back on my mom, and patted her face, trying to wake her up. "Mom, wake up. Are you in there? Can you hear me? Come on!"

She groaned and lifted her head up. Her hand went to her head, and she opened her eyes. When they focused on me again, my mom yelped and scooted back. I guess I still had the draconic eyes and scales. "What happened to you?" She asked. I let out a breath and sat back in the chair, removing the last of my draconic features. "To tell you that," I said, "I need to continue with the story." My dad pointed at me. "You had better continue. My son disappears for a week and comes back able to do this after supposedly getting lost in a make-believe world? And you claim everything was done by God for reasons unknown? I had better get a good reason why." In nodded. "I know, this is a lot to digest, but that's where the next part of my experience comes in.

"The portal opens just above the cove in the movie, so I explored it a bit. After that, curiosity got the best of me, and I went into the forest on the opposite side of the cove. Dangerous when there are dragons about, I know, but I couldn't help it. Out there, I ran into a dragon unlike anything I had seen, with four wings and light, cream and orange-red colors. This is the strangest part: it was able to speak. As it turned out, she was the previous holder of this gift, so being a dragon, she could turn human, which she did, and explained how I had been uh, chosen for receiving this and she had to give me the gift. So thenâ€!"

It took a good two or three hours to lay everything out, to retell everything that had happened to me while I had disappeared. All the while Holly got more and more excited, while my parents became more perplexed and shocked. However, all things considered, they were taking it amazingly well, especially after I had given them such hard proof. Being able to go dragon isn't something every teenage boy is able to do, you know. Finally, my story ended with my perception of my return, and my parents explained what happened at home while I was gone: the police, the search, Holly's reaction, and so on, so forth. I felt guilty after that, but decided it had all turned out for the better in the end.

After they finished, I led everyone out to the time rip/portal/whatever it was, and stopped in front of it. "Look around," I said. "There's nothing at all reflective around here, and the air is what is glowing here." I reached forward and passed my hand through it, and received nervous groans as my hand blurred and began to fade. "So we really do have a portal to a movie in our back yard," my mom stated, now more amazed than anything else.

"You want to see more?" I asked. "Come on then, I'll show you the cove." I grabbed my parent's arms and pulled at them, slowly leading them through. Holly went on her own, excited to see the world of a movie well up on her favorites list. We walked through and stood on the edge of the cove. I stood there, smiling, as my parents looked around, shell-shocked just as I had been. I looked up to see Hiccup and Toothless as well, on their way back to Berk. "Toothless!" Holly yelled, pointing up and jumping up and down excitedly. I laughed. "Maybe I'll introduce you to them one day. Astrid too."

I turned to look back at my mom and dad, who had looked up when Holly had yelled. Their eyes were as wide as saucers. As they stood there, still staring, my dad turned to look at me. "Okay," he said softly, "I think we believe you now."

## 16. Chapter 16: Settling Down

\*\*A/N-I'm back! Another filler chapter of sorts (and we get to meet another major player in this series, even if only briefly). Remember, reviews are appreciated, even if they're short and simple!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 16: Settling Down</p>

The temptation of visiting a new world is unbelievably strong, so after a few days of settling back down at home and plugging myself back into the real world (jobs and such, the realities of life), I found myself visiting Berk a lot, nearly every evening, in fact. After a couple of visits, I finally decided to take Holly with me, and discovered another interesting anomaly: girls will be girls, not even a whole planet of difference changes that.

Holly was ecstatic to meet both Hiccup and Toothless, and after only ten minutes of her pestering them in the cove, Hiccup pulled me to the side and whispered, "It's alright, you can keep her." Needless to say, Toothless ended up forcing me to get Holly to calm down a bit lest he leave her in a tree for some peace and quiet. Later on I took Holly into the village, where we eventually ran into Astrid. Even though Holly is only 10 and Astrid 17, they almost instantly stuck to each other like glue. Like I said above, girls will be girls, and as both of them are extremely "fashionable" and argumentative, they had a lot in common.

Some things did not go as well as I had hoped, however. Occasionally I would still get a cross look from someone who still had no trust in me, and many a time disgruntled sentences would be mumbled under their breath when they thought I couldn't hear. When someone started getting really antsy, however, they found themselves receiving a lovely saltwater bath, thanks to Hiccup and Toothless, and occasionally yours truly. After about a week, things finally calmed down as the general populace came to terms with the fact that, no, I would not be leaving anytime soon, and if they were nice enough and didn't get on my or Hiccup's bad side, I might actually lend a helping hand here and there. Of course, not everyone makes an instant friend, so a few certain Vikings still steered clear of me when they could. At least everyone understood that, while a natural lover of peace, I was not one to be trifled with.

About two weeks after my official return to Berk, Hiccup notified me of a very interesting turn of events: the Hooligan's closest affiliates and closest allies, the Bog Burglars, would be coming in a couple days to trade and come up to terms with recent happenings. He was worried in particular about one thing, however.

"What if they find out about, you know, you?" I laughed as we ducked into the back of the forge to talk. "Very few of them, if anyone, are going to find out," I replied. "I'll just hang around the cove when I visit, and you know when I'll be here." Hiccup rubbed the back of his

neck. "Yeah, well, there's one problem with that. I've got a friend in this tribe who is very, very stubborn when it comes to finding things out, worse than Astrid." "So bring her with you," I said, turning and inspecting Hiccup's most recent blueprints.

"Are you nuts?" Hiccup said. "First of all, how did you know my friend is a girl, and second of all, she'd probably try and take your head off when she finds out. She was a menace when we still fought the dragons, and she's been labeled as Rome's number one for not capturing because of what she can do." I shrugged and picked up a dagger, sharpening it with a claw. "To answer your question, Bog Burglars are mainly female, right? And second, remember where I come from. The only person who I read actually interacted with you on a regular basis was the heir to the "Chiefdom" in the Bog Burglar tribe, Camicazi."

Hiccup sighed and shrugged. "Okay, okay, fine, I'll bring her with me. But if she puts you in the healer's house for a week, don't blame me."

And so it was that a few days later, I went through the portal and down into the cove to meet with Hiccup before I met the infamous heir to leader of the Hooligan's sister tribe. "You sure about this?" Hiccup asked as I sat down on a boulder nearby. "She's back at the village now, already wondering what I came out here to do." I nodded. "Might as well get it over with then, huh? I'll be hiding in the grove of trees over there, just bring her by and I'll show myself when I think she's ready." Hiccup sighed and nodded. "Be right back then."

A few minutes later I watched from the branches of a small tree as Toothless came gliding in with two passengers. Hiccup was fidgeting a bit as they came down to land, but the other passenger was filled with curiosity. She was just as I had read as well, as short as Holly, skinny as Hiccup and I, and with long, braided gold hair reaching halfway down her back, in much the same style as, but longer than Astrid's hair.

"So where is your new friend?" Camicazi asked. Hiccup jumped down off Toothless and looked around. "He'll show himself soon enough." Cami laughed and went to the pond's edge, admiring her reflection and then looking around her. "So this is where you and Toothless first got to know each other, eh?" Hiccup nodded and looked at the Night Fury. "It wasn't far from here when I met my new friend either." Cami looked over her shoulder at him. "So is your friend a person, or a dragon?" hearing this, I leapt down from the tree and sidled up next to the cove wall, changing back and leaning against the cliff. Cami didn't notice, and I smiled. "Uh, well, he's a person, sort of." Cami stood up and looked at him quizzically. "What do you mean sort of? A person's a person, no matter how he looks."

"Yes, but not everything about a person is always visible," I said nonchalantly, causing Cami to jump. She spun to face me, pulling out a sword not unlike the one Hiccup owned, but a bit longer. I smiled and raised my hands. "Hey now, no need to get all uppity, Cami," I said and looked at Hiccup. Getting the cue, he went up to Camicazi and pulled her sword down. "Uh-um, Cami, this is the friend I told you about. You can put the sword down." Cami eyed me suspiciously, but slowly lowered her sword and sheathed it. I stepped away from the cove wall and held out my hand. "Nice to meet you finally, Camicazi.

I'm Hawken."

She tentatively took my hand, and I shook hers. "How-how do you know my name?" she asked. I chuckled. "Oh, talking with friends, reading books, that sort of thing, you get to finding out a lot. And speaking of talking, I heard the question you asked Hiccup." Cami gave me a look that said she wasn't following me. "So? You're a person. Not one from around here, by the looks of it, but a human. I was expecting Hiccup to have befriended another dragon, knowing him." "Uh, that's the thing, Cami, I, uh, I kind of did," Hiccup said. Cami raised an eyebrow at him, then looked at me again. "What is he babbling about?"

I laughed. "Well, you're right, Cami, I am human. Most of the time." "You're making no sense," she said. I nodded. "Stand back a bit and I'll show you." She stepped back, getting a bit suspicious again, and Hiccup sidled up next to her. "Whatever you do," he muttered, "don't try to impale him." Camicazi looked to him for an explanation, but was silenced by my next move.

I stepped back and turned to the nearest rock, and got into a running position. I sprinted to the boulder, took one step up onto it, and jumped into the air, gaining about 10 feet of height. Once I was as high up as I could get, I focused a mental picture and spread two Night Fury wings, powering them down and myself high into the air in one stroke. Below I heard Camicazi yell "Oh my gods!" as I finished the transformation and changed fully to Night Fury. I circled the cove once, then glided down to land next to Toothless. He looked at me with a slightly amused expression. ::I think you overdid it a bit, but her face was priceless,: he commented. I grinned, and morphed back, sauntering up to Hiccup and Cami again and taking a seat on a nearby rock.

"What. In. The. World. Are you?" Cami said, shocked. "Well, the most important thing right now is that I am a friend to Hiccup and therefore hopefully a friend of yours," I replied. "As for what I did right there, no I am not a witch or sorcerer, as I don't work in the realms of black magic and witchcraft." Cami shook herself and ran a hand through her hair. She glared at me. "Then what was that?" I smiled. "A gift, given to me by the last bearer of the ability, not a hundred feet from here." Cami put her hands on her hips. "A gift? By what, a dragon?" I nodded. "Hiccup can probably fill you in on the details, but yes, a dragon, chosen, like me, to be a sort of guardian for both races." "Uh huh."

It took a while, but in the end Cami finally ended up befriending me, mostly at Hiccup's request. The next couple of days, Hiccup and Cami, occasionally Astrid, came to the cove, and I ended up learning a few fighting skills from the Bog Burglar. I also found out just how much the two girls enjoy picking on each other, much like the twins. Of course, make a comment like that and they both turn on you. I learned that the hard way, and ended up taking refuge at the top of a tree.

Eventually, Cami had to leave, promising to come back and have a proper, in the open friendly duel with me and find out where I came from (that was one detail we had left out for that visit), and life went back to as it was before. Hiccup had a barrage of questions for me every time I came back, and I thought of plenty to ask him and Toothless as well, so combined we probably spent about two hours per

visit just exchanging info.

There was one thing that still nagged at me, though, one detail about our new friendship. While I was able to go to Berk just about whenever I wanted, chores notwithstanding, I had not had the chance to return the favor. Hiccup still had yet to visit my house, in my own world.

## 17. Chapter 17: Into My World

\*\*A/N-And the start of the next "Mini-adventure" begins! There are a few details here that you may notice don't line up with what we've seen in the new movie, of course, but everyone has their own theories, right? And keep that in mind as we go along in the series. A few books down they will be explained a little more, and maybe a little differently...\*\*

\*\*Reviews, as always, are appreciated!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 17: Into My World<p>

"Hey Mom?"

It had been a little under a month since my first disappearance, and as stated before, I had been visiting Berk practically every day I could. Now, I had decided it was about time Hiccup got the same chance, to visit the place I lived. Unfortunately he wouldn't be able to go anywhere else, seeing as he's supposed to be a movie character, but it's a start. However, like anything else that happens in my house, I had to clear the idea with at least one parent.

I walked into the kitchen, expecting her to be there, but the reply came from downstairs instead. "What is it?" my mom called up, walking up the stairs. I scratched the back of my head and looked around. "Well, you know how I've been going and visiting Berk a lot?" She nodded and walked past. "Yes, kind of hard to miss my son disappearing in the back yard every evening," she replied sarcastically. I sighed. "Well, I was wondering if, possibly, it would be alright for Hiccup to get a chance to visit here."

There was silence for a minute, and then my mom looked up at me from where she'd taken a seat. "Would the, uh, dragon be coming as well?" she asked. I chuckled a bit. "I thought I already explained that. Hiccup and Toothless are inseparable. They're never away from each other by more than 20 feet for any more than an hour. Of course the Fury would be coming with." She looked at the table, a concerned look on her face. "What about the dogs? You know how Barney gets around anyone he doesn't know, and a dragon will be worse." I sighed. "I'll make sure to introduce them, and if Barney goes off, I'll have Holly deal with him. The other two should be fine." (I think now would be a good time for me to explain this situation: I have three dogs, one of them being one of those annoying Mexican rats known as Chihuahuas, named Barney, and two heelers who would probably not care at all after meeting the strangers).

My mom sighed and looked out the door. Out over the rock bed we could see the shimmer from the portal. "Toothless is a bit large, though.

He might knock something over, or overreact to something." I shook my head. "Hiccup and I will lay down a few ground rules. Besides, Toothless is rather well known for his good behavior. Well, unless there's a mountain of fish somewhere." "Alright, alright," my mom relented. "Just make sure not to attract any attention, and if either of them breaks anything, you're paying for it."

I nodded and bolted out the door. "Thank goodness for jobs," I muttered, thinking about anything Toothless might hit. As I ran past my garden, I slowed down and looked at the beds. "There's rule number one," I muttered, then turned and walked through the portal.

The familiar view of the cove greeted me on the other side, and I opened a pair of wings and sailed down next to the pond, hoping the duo would be somewhere nearby, relaxing or having fun. Not surprisingly, they weren't anywhere to be seen, and that meant either back at the village, or out flying where I'd never find them. I sighed and looked up, hoping Hiccup was just at the forge or something. I focused on an average Western dragon shape, and the wings came out, the tail extended out behind me, and I looked up and with one flap bolted into the air and sailed over the trees toward Berk.

A couple minutes later, the first houses came into view, and as I neared, I formed a plan in my mind. I didn't want to be seen yet, so I flew up higher, scanning the streets below. I flew past his house, looking into his window for any sign. When there was none, I decided to take a closer look, changing color to match the sky, a rare crisp blue for Berk, and dipped down lower. Nope, I thought, he's not here. I can't hear anything inside.

Eliminating that possibility, I headed for the forge. Finally, I spotted him a few buildings away, and heading for the shop. Toothless was a ways ahead, almost to the forge. Perfect. Silently I tucked my wings in and dove down. Still unseen, I flared my wings just above and behind Hiccup, and dropped down, grabbing him from behind and soaring back upward.

"AAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!"

Hiccup screamed as I shot upward, and Toothless turned and bolted back toward us. Looking up and seeing me, he recognized me and started laughing. I executed a barrel roll, then dived back down toward the ground. "Oh gods!" Hiccup yelled, still not figuring it out, and as we neared the ground, he covered his face. About twenty feet up, I flared my wings, and slowly descended for a soft landing on the ground. I let go of Hiccup, who simply sat down and panted. Toothless sauntered up, still chuckling. ::You know, that's the only reason I can think of for wanting to fly on my own again,:: he said. ::All I can do is tackle him.:: I smirked and turned to Hiccup. "I'm sure you can come up with something at least a little more creative," I said to Toothless, which finally caught Hiccup's attention.

He looked up at me, and I could see everything click in his eyes. "Hawken? That was you?" I smiled as Toothless started snorting again. "One and the same," I replied, shrinking down to my human self again. Hiccup stood up shakily and leaned against Toothless. "Well, thank you so much for the Flight of Terror up there," he said. "I'm sure we have to plan another one, don't we?" Toothless nodded, and Hiccup looked at him. "Oh, great, now there's two of you, " he snarked. "You

think that's funny?" ::Yes, I believe I do,:: was Toothless' unheard reply. Hiccup sighed and looked back at me. "What a great influence you are." "I try my best," I said nonchalantly.

"Anyway, now that that's over, thanks so much," Hiccup said dryly, "what are you here for today? Just another visit? You're a bit early for that." I chuckled. "How about we head to your house," I replied, and began walking in that direction. Hiccup raised an eyebrow, but followed, Toothless following right behind. "Well, that's not secretive at all," Hiccup commented. I shrugged. "It concerns your father as well, and I'm taking an educated guess that's where he is." Hiccup nodded, then hopped onto Toothless' saddle. 'Sounds like something important, so let's hurry up," he said, and they flew toward the house. I smiled, opening a pair of wings, and followed.

We walked in to find Stoick still finishing breakfast at the table. 'Didn't know it was still that early," I commented. Hiccup smiled, and Stoick noticed us. "Oi, Hiccup, Aren't ye supposed te be at the forge?" Hiccup nodded. "I was on the way there when Hawken found me. He seems to have something of importance to tell us." Stoick looked at me. "Well, what is it?" I took a breath, and said, "Well, I was talking to my parents, and arranged an opportunity for Hiccup and Toothless to, uh, visit my house for the weekend and, well, I came to see if that was alright with you two."

Hiccup, of course, brightened up instantly, and Toothless began squirming. ::I don't see a problem,:: he blurted. Stoick's reaction, however, was what surprised me. I expected an argument, a reason why Hiccup had to stay here for a while still, working at the forge, but instead I was greeted with a massive grin as Stoick said. 'Well, what're ye waitin' fer? Hiccup, get yer clothes!" Hiccup raced up to his room, followed by the Night Fury, but I stood there, a bit shocked at the reaction. Stoick looked at me and chuckled. "Hiccup forgot te mention he had some time off earned, didn't he?" he asked. I nodded. "Well, this makes things easier."

I waited outside for Hiccup to finish packing, and heard Stoick yelling at him to hurry up. A minute later Toothless came flying out the door, ready to go, and Stoick practically kicked Hiccup out the door while telling him to have a good time. Hiccup mounted Toothless and secured himself, and we lifted off with Stoick waving us off behind us.

As we were flying, Hiccup turned to me. 'So what's with the sudden invitation?" he asked. I shrugged. "It's what friends do. Besides, don't tell me you haven't wanted to visit." Hiccup laughed and said, "Yes, but I'm more polite than the other Vikings, who'll just tell you outright what they want." ::Agreed,::: Toothless commented. I looked at the dragon. "By the way, don't worry Toothless, you get to stay too, though you may have to stay in the back yard for most of the time." ::Why?::: "Because you're a bit big for the houses in my world, well at least my neighborhood. I promise you'll be able to come in at least occasionally though." ::Good,::: was the only reply.

The cove appeared below us, and we dove down to land in the clearing in front of the portal. I changed back and turned to face the other two. "Alright, first some ground rules," I said. "First, no one steps into the garden unless I'm there. I'm not risking anyone squashing

the plants, as they've already had a rough time earlier this year. Second," I said, looking specifically at Toothless, "there will be no flying or breathing of fire." ::What?!:: Toothless protested. Hiccup nodded. "Toothless, remember? We're not supposed to exist there," he explained for me. "If anyone else sees us, they'll freak." ::Okay, so I get the flying, but why not the fire, at least even a little bit?:: "Because just about everything is flammable in my world," I explained. "Not to mention you have a fireball that not only blows up, but also can melt just about anything. Even a little fire could cost us thousands of dollars, a lot of money in my world. Kapeesh?" Both of them looked at me, clueless. I sighed. "That means got it?" "Oh, yeah, sorry, we get it."

"Now, the exception to that might be if I make a fire in the back yard," I continued. "Next rule: don't touch anything if you don't already know what it is. While it might be safe to me, I've got a lot of things that could hurt you in my house. Yes, that means you too, Toothless." "Got it." ::Got it.:: "Now that should just about coverâ€|no, I take that back," I said, remembering a few other things. "Toothless, there's a lot of things that make loud noises where I live, so if I don't overreact, neither do you, okay?" ::I think I've heard plenty of loud noises thanks to him,:: Toothless said, gesturing to Hiccup, ::so that shouldn't be a problem.:: I nodded, and turned to Hiccup. "Also, have you ever met a dog?" Hiccup gave me a weird look. "Aren't they dangerous, being related to wolves and all?" he asked. I laughed and shook my head. "Only if you attack them. Dogs are domesticated wolves, and most are very friendly. I'm asking because I have three of them." "Three?" "Yes, three, and I warn you now, the small one won't attack you, but until he gets used to you, he'll be barking his head off, so just try to withstand the noise. And no scaring them, Toothless." ::What? Won't that help keep it quiet?:: I shook my head. "No, and it may very well get the older one after you. I'm not sure about the youngest, but she's usually pretty good. She jumps and chews on everything, mind you."

Hiccup sighed. "Can't be any worse than Toothless here," he commented. ::Hey!::: "Oh, quit growling. You know it's true." I held up my hands. "Alright, alright, let's just get this over with. Toothless, just do your best to ignore the dogs, and Hiccup, get to know them or they'll be at us all night." "Fine, Hawken. Let's go then."

I nodded, and turned to the portal, motioning to follow me. I stepped through and watched Berk's forests shimmer and fade, replaced by bright blue sky and my own familiar back yard. I didn't react, already having seen it a number of times, but I heard Hiccup quietly gasp at what he surely thought must have been some form of magic. We finally stepped all the way through, and the first thing Hiccup noticed was the architecture. "Very geometric," he said. I sighed and smirked. Leave it to the inventor to notice something like that. "Yeah, that's how everything works nowadays. No one really builds their own house, housing companies lay out a couple blueprints, and workers fill in the neighborhoods with the same house over and over again. Nothing much more to it. Now, don't step on anything in my garden."

We went around the garden, and walked across the yard. I could hear Toothless resisting the urge to roll around in it, as it was first of all not as robust as the "dragon-nip" he was used to, plus Holly still hadn't cleaned up the doggy "presents" everywhere. I sighed and

stepped up onto the deck, right away getting bombarded with more questions about the structure. When Hiccup was finished, I said, "Okay, wait here," and walked up to the sliding door and opened it a crack, stepping through. Right away the youngest dog, Panda, came racing through the house to see me, jumping up on me and impeding my plan. "Mom!" I yelled, looking around. From downstairsâ€|. .

"What!" came the reply. "We're, uh, we're back, and I'm going to attempt to introduce them to the dogs, okay?" "Alright, just make sure no one causes any problems!" I nodded, even though she couldn't see me, and went and called the dogs over. As they came into the kitchen, I stuck my head out the door. "Okay, just let the old one, Jesse, sniff you're hand, she can't see very well, and if the younger one, Panda, starts jumping on you, just push her down, okay Hiccup?" He nodded. I opened the door, and sure enough, Panda went racing out to see who it was with a quick bark, and Barney went nuts.

It took a full half hour to get the Chihuahua to stop barking and Panda to calm down. Of course the second goal never really happened, we just left her with Toothless, who found it amusing to let Panda chase his tailfin (we removed the saddle rig to make sure nothing was damaged). Hiccup actually became rather fond of Barney, mostly because the little dog was nothing like he'd ever seen, and Jesse decided that neither of the newcomers was really worth her attention.

After the situation with the dogs was sorted out, I led Hiccup inside to the kitchen table, where I began to get bombarded with questions. We ended up sitting there for nearly 3 hours, without even leaving the kitchen. Finally, dinner came, along with a welcome break from the Q&A, and Hiccup had his first taste of spaghetti (I made a mental note to teach the rest of the teens, were they to ever visit, how to eat in our world before they sit down to the table). "This stuff is great," Hiccup commented for probably his eighth time, after his third plate. I'm still trying to figure out how he managed to eat that much. "Is all the food here this good?" "When you're in my house, it will be," my mom threatened jokingly. "Depends on your taste," I replied more seriously. "Some people hate noodles, while others, like you and I apparently, love them."

Hiccup had a second treat when we brought out the ice cream for dessert, and declared it to be the best thing he'd ever tasted (spaghetti apparently ranked second). I smirked and patted him on the back. "Remind me to teach you how to make football ice cream sometime."

Finally, after all that, Hiccup and I ended up in the living room, where he became enthralled with everything else new, especially the miniature house full of vegetation. "They look harmless," Hiccup commented, visually dissecting the sundew in his hands. "You sure they can eat insects?" I laughed and held up another plant, covered in the remains of its former prey, and proved to Hiccup once and for all that I really did have some of the weirdest things on either his or my world. After a while, things died down again, and I decided it was time to show Hiccup the source of my Berkian knowledge: the movie. Before I could start it, however, Hiccup held up a hand. "What about Toothless? He's part of this too, you know." I sighed and slapped my forehead. "He's been so quiet out there I forgot about him." I walked over to the door and stuck my head out.

"Toothless?"

A dark shape moved off to one side of the grass. Toothless lifted up his head, revealing the puppy snuggled up against him. "Well, I see you two are getting along just fine," I remarked. Toothless shrugged. ::Hey, it's not my fault she tired herself out.:: I laughed, then motioned my head inside. "Come on, I'm about to start the movie." ::What movie?::

I gave Toothless a deadpan glare. He sat there for a second, then it clicked.:: Oh, right, that movie.:: I nodded, and said, "Come on, and make sure Panda comes with." Toothless stepped up onto the deck, and padded over to the door. It was a bit of a squeeze, but with his wings above him, he barely fit through, careful to bend around the table and not knock over anything, and sauntered into the living room. ::Should I just lay here?:: he asked. I nodded. "Just on the floor, up against the couch is fine. The living room should be plenty big enough." ::Why's it called that?:: "Because it's the most lived-in room, center of the house, yadda yadda yadda. Anyway, make yourself comfortable, okay?"

I turned and switched on the TV, popping in the DVD and closing the player. "If you two have any questions about how this works, try to save them for later, and just enjoy the movie for now." The menu came up on the screen, and Hiccup jumped at the sight of Gobber on the screen. I smiled and clicked play.

The opening part of the movie began rolling, and a thought popped into my head. "Watch closely at the stars behind the moon there," I said quietly. Hiccup and Toothless both leaned forward to see. The DreamWorks logo appeared, and a familiar shadow passed over the CGI stars. Both of them started. "Was thatâ€¦ Toothless?" Hiccup asked. I nodded, and then turned back to the movie as Hiccup started muttering about the shadow. He got another shock as the movie actually started, and he heard himself narrating the beginning. "How'd they get my voice? And I don't ever recall saying those lines," he remarked. I laughed. "You don't exist here, remember? So let's just say there's someone in this world who sounds exactly like you." Hiccup sighed and nodded, then turned back to watch the screen.

Throughout the movie, all three of us got to laugh at each other, both simply due to the funny parts of the movie, as well as the reactions on the two character's faces, especially Toothless. The look on his face during the "First Flight" scene was priceless. Hiccup had about the same reaction when he saw his new hairdo right afterward. As it turned out, watching the movie brought out some rather strong emotions regarding the connections between the pair and their friends on Berk. Surprisingly, and luckily, Hiccup didn't react too hard during the "disown" scene, as I had expected him to.

However, there was one question that really nagged me as the end of the movie neared, and I had to ask. "Toothless?" Said Night Fury turned to look at me. "How exactly did Hiccup-"" ::-lose his leg?::

I stuttered for a moment. "Well, uh, yeah, that's exactly what I was going to ask." ::It should be obvious that's the question as you paused the movie right after they showed the fight.:: Toothless shifted a bit, and let out a draconic sigh. ::We collided with the monster's tail, and Hiccup's leg was between me andâ€¦ the tail

itself. That's part of why he was knocked off. It didn't help that, due to the break, it twisted and I never saw it outside my wings. It was seriously burned.:: "So, when you crash landed on the beach," I continued, piecing it together, "The landing ended any chance of saving it." I looked at Hiccup, who had a bit of a distant look on his face. "I'm sorry I brought it up, Hiccup, but I wanted to know." He smiled. "Eh, I kind of expected it. Don't repeat what he said, I don't need to know the details, but it's alright, it was a while ago."

There was silence for a minute before Hiccup said, "Well, let's move on, shall we? Start the movie again." I smiled and obliged. After the movie finished, I decided we should watch the short videos that had also been made, and Hiccup had a great time going on about all the inaccuracies of them (mainly the names of the dragons, but you get the idea, lots that didn't happen). After that was over, it was getting really late, so I set up a small mattress and sleeping bag for Hiccup in the living room so he could sleep with Toothless, and retired to my own room. The weekend had gotten off on a great start, though I had forgotten one very important detail that would cause a whole lot of trouble the next day.

## 18. Chapter 18: Unexpected Circumstances

### Chapter 18: Unexpected Circumstances

I woke up the next morning before Hiccup or Toothless did, and took the opportunity to sneak past and make breakfast undisturbed. About 5 minutes later, sizzling hash-browns and scrambled eggs aroused at least one of the living room occupants.

"What time is it?" I heard from Hiccup. "About 9:30 or so," I said. I walked out to see Hiccup stretching his arms, then look down toward the end of his sleeping bag. There, lying right across the bag, and effectively pinning down Hiccup's legs, was Toothless. Hiccup groaned as I stifled a laugh, though rather unsuccessfully. "Toothless, get off! I can't move!" Hiccup griped. I walked over and tapped on the lazy reptile's head. "Come on, get up ya lazy bum!" He didn't move. However, I could see a smile forming on his lips. "You think you're funny?" I asked, winking at Hiccup. "Well, then, I guess you don't get any breakfast if you can't move."

Toothless' eyes snapped open, and he groaned, but got up and stretched. ::I was comfy! You have to use that on me?:: I laughed. "You were flattening your rider there. You alright Hiccup?" He stood up slowly and shakily. "Eh, just some numb legs. What's burning?" I sniffed the air. "The eggs!"

Breakfast turned out okay (even if a bit overcooked), and once again I was amazed by the amount of food Hiccup could pack away. Toothless hung outside munching on a pile of fish I had secretly gathered in Berk the night before. As we finished up, I remembered there was one last thing I had yet to show Hiccup. Plus, it was a chance to do one thing I always loved: scaring the living daylights out of someone.

"Hey Hiccup?" "Hmm?" he mumbled, looking up from the last of his toast. "Could you wait here for a minute? There's something I have to get real quick." He nodded, and I went to my room. When I came back

out, I was adorned with a very special scaly pet around my neck. I snuck up behind Hiccup, unlooped Candice from my neck, and placed her head on his shoulder.

That was all it took. Hiccup glanced over at the snake on his arm, a moment of wide eyes, then he freaked. "AAAAAAAHHHHH! It's going to bite me!" He leaped backward, falling into Toothless, and then scrambled up and looked at me as I practically fell on the floor laughing. "You should have seen-gasp-the look on your face!" I laughed. Hiccup blinked, and then looked like I had been hit over the head. "Ookay, care to explain why you're carrying a very dangerous looking reptile on your arm like it's a rope?" I smirked, then took a deep breath. "Okay, don't tell me you completely forgot. Remember how I told you about me having pet snakes?"

Hiccup sighed as my reminder clicked. "Right. So you decided to quietly let me forget about that detail, then scare me when you decide to give the reminder." "Come on, she's not so bad. This is Candice, she's a corn snake," I said, holding her out toward Hiccup. "She won't hurt you, believe me." He looked at me apprehensively, but then sighed. "I'm not going to get out of this without holding her, am I?" I smiled. "Nope!"

Eventually, Hiccup got used to the idea of a whole different reptilian pet. After he calmed down, and I put Candice away, I decided to teach Hiccup another exciting aspect of our entertainment here: board games!

Okay, fine, so board games aren't really exciting, but it kept us busy while keeping even Toothless out of trouble. Halfway through our game of Blokus, he came up tapping his nose on the glass door. I opened it and poked my head out. "Problem?" He shook his head. ::No, it's just getting boring out here. Can I come in and see what you two are doing?:: I shrugged and moved out of the way. "I doubt it will excite you much more than sunbathing for an hour." He snorted and squeezed in, then looked down at the game on the table. ::Exactly what is this?:: Hiccup looked at me. "Is he playing too?" I laughed and shook my head. "Toothless, it's a board game, one of thousands." ::Rather colorful for a game.::

For the next half hour, Toothless sat next to the table and watched the game progress. In the end, Hiccup won. I smiled "I take it you're pretty good at strategy," I said. Hiccup nodded. "Kind of have to be when you ride a dragon." He smiled and looked at Toothless. "Especially one as troublesome as he is." Toothless jerked his head up and glared at us. ::Oh, very funny.:: Hiccup and I smiled. "You know it's true!" ::No it's no-::

DING DONG!

I probably jumped about 2 feet straight up at that. Hiccup and Toothless both went on edge, Hiccup grabbing the dagger he had in his boot and Toothless growling at the front door. ::What in the world was that?:: He hissed. I blinked. "Calm down, that was just a doorbell. Unfortunately, that means someone else is here!" I glanced at my mom, who was coming up from downstairs. "Mom, who is that?" She grimaced, then said. "Get them somewhere where they won't be found. Holly invited the Ranslows over." I sighed. "Hold them at the door. You two," I said, pointing at Hiccup and Toothless, "get downstairs, quickly!"

I led them down to the basement, and over to a playhouse in the back corner. "Get in there, and stay down. Do not make a sound or-"

Too late, I heard the two younger boys stomping into the house. "Why?" Hiccup asked. I held my finger up to my mouth, and he quieted down. "Why do we have to hide?" he whispered. "Because I am the only person whose family knows about you or the other world here. No one else can know, or else they'd go berserk!" I looked toward the stairs. "If anyone comes down, stay still and don't make a sound!"

I rushed back to the stairs, just in time to keep the boys from rushing down them. "Sorry," I said, closing the door behind me, "but no one can go downstairs today." Just my luck, the older child, Kaia, came around the corner upstairs and looked down. "Why? That's where all the toys are." I grimaced. "We're trying to keep the basement clean today, plus I've got a, uh, very delicate project going on down there, and no one can mess with it." She didn't look convinced, but sighed and walked off anyway. I went upstairs and found Holly and Kaia's sister playing in Holly's room. She winked at me, so I knew at least she had gotten the hint.

As it turned out, not only had Holly invited Arya and Kaia to play, but their mother had come over as well to learn a few recipes from my mom (mothers, what is it with them and cooking?). I was able to make a few quick trips downstairs to check on our other guests, and luckily Hiccup was busying himself with drawing. However, I should have known it wouldn't hold up forever. After over an hour of dodging the kids, I happened to be checking things in my greenhouse, and missed a certain dirty-blonde teenager sneaking past me and down the stairs. Thank goodness for creaky steps, and I turned around to see her disappearing down the steps.

"Kaia!" I yelled, jumping up and racing to the stairway. Where was my mom when I needed her? I looked over to see her already down the second set of steps. I leapt over the wall, not caring if she noticed my sudden increase in agility, and caught her just as she started opening the door. She peaked in before I pulled her back. "I don't see any project," she said, crossing her arms and looking at me. "What are you really trying to keep down here?" I sighed. "Okay, so there's no project. But it's still something I can't show you. It's a personal secret for my family, okay?"

It didn't work. Kaia glared at me, and dashed into the basement. I leapt out and caught her again, starting to appreciate strength as well as speed. "Seriously, stop. There's nothing down here that you can't see right now that I am going to show you, and it's nothing you would really care to see anyway. It's.. sentimental for my family." Kaia crossed her arms again. "Then why are you trying so hard to stop me from see-"

We were interrupted by a very quiet, but extremely noticeable rumbling, vibrating noise emanating from the playhouse, followed by a much quieter, barely noticeable gagging noise. I winced and mentally slapped myself. Of all the things to ruin their hiding place, it has to be a gassy dragon?

Kaia looked past me. "What was that?" I shrugged. "Uh, could have been one of the pipes, I don't know." For the third time, Kaia dashed past me and toward the tent. I stopped her again, but it was too

late. She looked at the tent, and gasped. Through the clear window of the tent, in plain sight, was the tip of Toothless' tail, curled up, with gear on, and worst of all, it was twitching.

Kaia's eyes widened to the size of dinner plates, and she gasped, while I just shook my head. "Oh, no." She looked at me. "That'sâ€|.that'sâ€|.it's impossibleâ€| that isâ€|"

There wasn't any point to hiding it any more. Kaia knew, and was sure to tell everyone around her if I didn't convince her in some way, or come right out and say it. "Is thatâ€| Toothless?" I nodded, defeated. "Yes, it's Toothless." I looked at the tent. "Guys, the gig is up, she knows. You can come out."

Slowly, the flap of the tent lifted up, and out first came Hiccup, followed by Toothless, who sat down and looked at me guiltily, but with a mix of I-told-you-so on his face as well. I turned to Kaia to start explaining, but she wasn't behind me anymore. Hiccup cleared his throat, and pointed down.

Kaia had fainted dead away on the floor.

#### 19. Chapter 19: Breaking Silence

\*\*A/N-Last chapter for a few days, and this one jumps between two major incidents, so sorry if it seems a little fast-paced for just one round. Reviews are welcome, flames will be ignored!\*\*

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><p>Chapter 19: Breaking Silence</p>

"Oh, just perfect," I said, looking down at Kaia. I turned to Hiccup. "Over there, on the other side of the basement, see that white box?" I said, gesturing to the washing machine. Hiccup nodded. "There's a bottle of water on it. Bring it to me." He nodded and ran over to get it while I knelt down and tried to wake Kaia up. "Come on, I can't have you passed out in the basement right now!" I said, tapping her on the cheek. Hiccup came back with the red Nalgene in his hand. "This it?" He asked. I nodded, and he handed me the bottle, which I opened and dribbled on Kaia's face. Hiccup and Toothless both backed up next to the playhouse they were hiding in before as Kaia spluttered and spat out the water. She looked up at me.

"Hawken? What in the world just happened?" I sighed. "A lot more than I care to explain," I said. Kaia propped herself up slowly, still unable to see the two Berkians behind me. "I feel as if I just came out of a dream. I could have sworn I saw those two characters from that favorite movie of yours." She laughed. "Of course that couldn't happen." Kaia looked back at me and noticed the look on my face. "What?" she asked. "Um, that's the thing," I said, turning to look behind me. Kaia followed my eyes and leaned to look around me, then froze.

For a couple minutes, nobody said anything, then Hiccup made a tentative wave. "Yeah," I breathed. Kaia looked back at me, then Hiccup, then back at me. "So it wasn'tâ€| a dream." I shook my head. "I'm afraid not, and that's where the problem is." I said, standing up as Kaia did. "Yes, I know, it should be impossible, but they're

here, and we forgot you were coming over, so no one was supposed to know." I looked her straight in the eye. "I know this is shocking, but no one else can know, at least not yet. Please tell me you won't tell-"

"Kaia? It's time to go!" I heard footsteps coming down the stairs, and started to panic. I looked at Kaia, who nodded in understanding and went to slow her mother down. "Get in the playhouse!" I whispered loudly to Hiccup and Toothless, who slipped back inside as quickly as they could, and I stood in front of the doorway. Just in time, too, as Kaia's mother, Alicia, stepped into the basement. "Come on Kaia, you weren't supposed to come down—" she stopped when she noticed me guarding the playhouse. "Hi, Hawken. I thought you said no one was supposed to come down here." She looked around. "Doesn't' look like anything is different." I smiled weakly. "Uh, yeah, we uh, just didn't want anyone messing up the basement. We just cleaned it not too long ago." Alicia frowned. "Then why-?"

Kaia stepped up and pulled on her arm. "Come on Mom, you said it was time to go. So let's go!" Alicia looked at her in mild surprise, but shrugged and turned to leave. Kaia looked over her shoulder and gave a nod of assurance: she wouldn't tell, but I could tell she was going to get the whole story out of me in return. They almost made it back to the stairwell, beforeâ€|. .

"Whoa, WHOOOAAAAHHHHHHH!" CRASSHHHH!

There was a loud thud as Hiccup lost his balance and fell over Toothless into a pile of toys, as Toothless yelped in surprise. I winced as Alicia turned around, and sighed inwardly. Things just aren't going to go right for me today, are they? Alicia stepped back into the basement despite Kaia's protest. "Is someone else over there?" I quickly shook my head. "Uh, no, no one here. I, uh, just knocked something over." Alicia didn't look convinced and crossed her arms as she took another step forward. "Mom, stop, let's just go!" Kaia said, tugging at her mother's arm. "It's supposed to be a surprise he's working on!" Alicia looked down at Kaia. "So you know what it is?" She asked, and Kaia froze. "I, uh, no, I just happened to come down as he was working on it. I'm not sure what it is, but I think some sort of new toy or sculpture." Alicia smiled. Well, I'm sure it would be fine if an adult saw what it was. It won't do any harm." She looked at me. "Does your mother know? She said there wasn't anything down here, are you hiding something from her?" I sighed. Where was my mom when I needed her? Or my sister for a distraction? "Look she said that because what I have down here is a very delicate matter, I can't show anyone else what it is." I held up my hands to say not to come closer. "Kaia is already one to many people, and she doesn't even know all of what I'm doing. I'd like to keep it that way."

"Hawken, what's going on-?" I jumped in shock as another voice came from the doorway, and my mom came in through the door. She stopped and stared at me, and slowly, I noticed Kaia and Alicia were doing the same. I suddenly had a very bad feeling. "What just happened?" I asked. From behind me, Hiccup whispered, "Uh, Hawken, look behind you." I did, and jerked in surprise. My mom had scared me more than I thought, and in response I had spread out a pair of brightly colored, finlike wings. I quickly retracted them and looked sheepishly at Kaia and her mom. "Wh-whatâ€|. Was.. that?" Alicia stammered, eyes wide as dinner plates. I brought my hand to my forehead and sighed. "I guess

that's that then. It's too late to hide it." By the stairs, my mom nodded, both in response and as an 'I knew it would happen' gesture. I let out another sigh. "I guess I might as well explain."

Needless to say, it was hard to get Alicia to believe my story. My family has deeply rooted beliefs, the Ranslows even deeper rooted. To try and comprehend the fact that there was another earth connected to ours now, as well as another sentient group of creatures that could comprehend what we knew and said, is a lot to swallow for the more religious types. Needless to say, when I led everyone upstairs with Hiccup and Toothless behind them, it took a long time to smooth out all the details. By the time the explaining was over with, it was getting late already, and the end results consisted of the kids being astounded and Alicia being dumbfounded, sitting on the couch with an almost empty look on her face as she tried to even listen to what I was saying, let alone believe it. The icing on that cake, however, was the proof I gave them: the portal that was constantly glowing in the back yard, as well as the obvious fact that there was a dragon in the same room as them.

I looked at Alicia. "There is one thing I have to ask of all of you, now," I said. "You know the reactions of people when they hear about things like this. Without the proof being in front of their eyes, they'd never believe you. With the proof, they'd faint." I looked between them, then at Hiccup and Toothless lounging on the floor. "I need everyone to keep this quiet, because if one family couldn't handle it, the rest of the world certainly won't. There'll come a time when it will be proper to reveal this gift God gave me, but until then, can you keep a secret?" Alicia was the first to nod in agreement, which wasn't a surprise. However, one of the boys still had a question for me. "Can we tell our friends?" I shook my head. "No, no one can know, especially other kids. They'll be more likely to spread rumors around. Yes, you can tell your father, but only him," I said, sensing the next question. Todd wasn't there, so it was obvious the kids would want to tell him when they went home

"Hawken's right," my mom added in. "Most everyone wouldn't be able to handle this. Please keep it quiet." Everyone agreed, reluctantly, and Alicia, surprisingly, gave the kids a few minutes to ask the questions they all had. I wish she hadn't. By the end, Hiccup was red in the face from having to answer so many questions about him and Astrid, and I was sick of repeating my story about saving him.

Finally they did leave, though, and Hiccup and I sighed and flopped against the couch. "I thought they would never go," Hiccup said, and looked over at me. "Warn me next time, will you?" I gave a weak laugh. "Remind me to check with my parents to make sure nothing else is going on when you come over."

We both gave a half-hearted laugh, then Hiccup looked back at me. "So if hiding us was a waste of time, why did you even try?" I groaned as I sat up. "Because had Kaia not run downstairs, none of this would have happened in the first place. I'm not that great at making up stories on the spot, in case you didn't notice." ::You don't say,:: Toothless commented, a smirk on his muzzle. I glared at him. "Well, if a certain Mr. Gassy hadn't decided to be himself at such an inopportune moment, we still might have avoided it." That wiped the smirk off Toothless' face real quick, and had he not been black, he

would have probably turned red at that.

I sighed. "Well, now that all of that's over with, I hope, and you guys are staying another night, what should we do?"

Naturally Hiccup picked activities that were relatively slow and relaxing, like board games and movies, which was expected after the fiasco of before. What surprised me was that of all the things we could have done, Hiccup chose to watch a nature documentary.

"Seriously?" I asked, giving him a raised eyebrow. "What?" he exclaimed. "I enjoy learning, something wrong with that?" I couldn't argue with him on that, though I thought he would have at least picked something more exciting. "I'm coming over again at some point, right? That can wait until then. Besides, knowledge can be entertaining too." Good to know I'm not the only nerd around. As the evening wound down, we found ourselves discussing random things and knickknacks we found around the house, and went to sleep without any other big events (unless, of course, you consider Toothless' reaction after tasting toothpaste to be an event. Apparently he doesn't like mint, heh heh).

The next morning we were all a bit lazy in getting up, but eventually my father decided we couldn't sleep any longer, and kicked us out of bed. It was about time to head back to Berk anyway, so we headed out back and into the portal. Once on the other side, I morphed into my original half-form. "Why?" was all Hiccup asked. I shrugged. "Why not? I can get around faster this way." ::You still look weird,: Toothless commented. I cast him a sideways glance. "Well, then, it fits me, doesn't it?"

When we landed in the village, however, I noticed right away something was off. Everyone was hustling and bustling, trying to get this cart there or that stall up over here. Stoick happened to be nearby helping set up a temporary stall and noticed us land. "Hiccup, Hawken, back already?" he asked as he walked over. "Nah, we're still there, this is just a hallucination," Hiccup said nonchalantly. "Of course we're back, it's been a couple of days. What's going on?" Stoick stared down at him with a slight frown. "Ye forgot, didn't ye?" Hiccup thought for a minute, then groaned and face palmed. "Yeah, yeah, I did, sorry." Stoick sighed and looked at me. "Then I take it you don't know yet," he said. I glared at him. "Well, if I don't know whatever is going on, can you explain it to me already? I hate it when people beat around the bush, alright?" Stoick laughed. "Very well then. In about three day's time, we'll be hostin' the annual gathering of all the Viking tribes, here on this island. There's competitions, awards, a banquet, so on so forth, and ye an' Hiccup there are two of the guests o' honor."

There was silence for a second as I raised my eyebrow. "And when did I sign up for that?" I asked. Stoick shook his head. "Ye didn't. There was a vote as for who would be one of the main guests. All o' the teens are going to be recognized this year, but ye and Hiccup have done a bit more." "Okay, but still, why me? I can understand why Hiccup, since he ended the war and killed the Red Death, and so on, blah, blah, blah, but I haven't really done much worth recognizing." Stoick just laughed again and clapped a hand on my shoulder, ignoring the size difference between us (he really doesn't know his own strength). "Oh, ye've done plenty to be recognized fer. Ye saved Hiccup from certain death once and ended the ongoing feud with the Clubswingers." I nodded. "Fine, fine, when does everything start

exactly?" "Three days from now, the honor ceremony is in the evening. It all lasts for about three days as well," Stoick replied. "The second day we have the trading stalls open and the annual fighting competition. The third is the rest of the competitions, including a brand new one!" He smiled mysteriously, like he was hiding something, but I brushed it off. "I'll have to check in with my parents, but I should be free," I said, "but I'll let you know tomorrow for sure." Stoick nodded and turned to Hiccup. "And you need to start rememberin' things like this. Yer goin' tae be chief someday, and a chief can't forget things like the annual gathering. Got it?" Hiccup slowly nodded, turning red. Stoick let out a huff. "Good. Now if ye don' mind, I need to return to helping set things up." He walked away, and I turned to Hiccup, who was red as a beet. "What?!" He snapped. I laughed in response. "Eh, forget about it. Everyone gets chewed out by their parents occasionally." We turned toward Hiccup's house to drop his things off, but not before he muttered, "I bet you don't have to worry about that anymore." I smiled. "More than ever, actually."

For the rest of the day, both of us, and Toothless, surprisingly, helped set up the stalls and the decorations in the Mead Hall (Toothless isn't exactly known for being the helping-hand sort). Who knew Vikings had an eye for popular dÃ©cor? Anyway, the day wound down and I headed home to check my calendar for my free days. As expected, there was a break in activities for the middle of the week for me (I didn't happen to have to go to work then), so I had time to spare. "Time to go check in with mom, I guess," I muttered

I found her downstairs on the computer. "Hey mom, can I ask you about something?" I said. She looked up. "Hmm? What is it?" I thought for a minute about how to word it, then said, "There's a, uh, gathering in Berk in a couple days, sort of like an annual get-together for everyone, and I'm uh, requested to be there." She looked at me with a questioning stare. "It's not something to do with religion or anything, it is?" she asked. I sighed. "No, no, more like a tradition, a celebration of alliances, from what I gather. There are a few competitions too, but everyone's expecting me to be there. Some sort of recognition ceremony or something." She nodded. "Anything going on here? When is it?" "Three days, and no, there's nothing on the calendar." My mom sat back and thought it over for a minute. "I don't see a problem with it, but just come home in the evenings," she said. "And, before you go, you need to do a couple chores as well." I groaned, but she gave me a hard glare, and I sighed. "Fine, fine, I'll finish them up tonight." She nodded. "Good. And if there's anything you're needed for over there, just ask me, I understand how everyone seems to think you're important."

I raised an eyebrow. "How do you figure?" "You're wanted at an award's ceremony, and don't forget you told me about the incident with the other, oh, what did you call it, tribe?" I nodded, and she waved me off. "Well, if you're going to go, you'd better get started on those chores," she said, and waved me up the stairs. As I walked up, I called back down, "I'll let you know how each day goes, alright?" She nodded. "Alright. Make sure to have fun!" I rolled my eyes. "I don't think that will be much of a problem." I headed upstairs to get started on my chores so that I wouldn't get stuck disappointing Stoick.

I woke up to a clear sky outside, a crisp, bright blue. That was good, because I'd noticed that the clearer the skies were here, the

more likely we'd at least have decent weather in Berk. That was a good thing, because the one day I'd gone to Berk to escape a storm in my home, it was twice as bad there. Bad idea. I gathered a few things up, like my sword, a small pack, and a couple snacks, and let my mom know I was heading off to help out. I stepped through the portal and was about to fly over to the village, when I noticed the teens and their dragons landing in the cove, with Toothless and Hiccup acting like they had been waiting there for a while. "I thought they were supposed to be helping decorate," I said under my breath, and put my gear down as I morphed into a Terrible Terror and silently crept down the wall of the cove. I came up and changed back behind a large boulder near Hiccup.

"Now, tell me again why we're supposed to be here?" I heard Snotlout ask as the group gathered in front of Hiccup. Before anyone could answer, I popped up over the boulder. "I could ask all of you the same thing," I said loudly.

Every single one of them, including Toothless, squealed and jumped into the air. Thorn threw a couple of tail spikes, which impaled the wall to my right. I burst out laughing as everyone caught their breath again. "Gee, I knew the girls were high pitched, but I didn't expect that scream coming from you two," I said, pointing to Tuffnut and Snotlout. Tuffnut crossed his arms and glared at me. "That was NOT funny, Hawken." I chuckled and pointed to the two girls, who were starting to giggle as well at them. "I believe some of us disagree." Fishlegs looked around. "You came out of nowhere. That's, like, plus 15 stealth!" he said. I sighed at his statistic antics and looked at Hiccup. "Anyway, now that I've had my fun, what are you doing here?" I asked. "I thought everyone was trying to set up." Hiccup rolled his eyes. "Well, as I was about to say before you so kindly decided to pop in, the gang here has been selected to do an aerial stunt show after everyone gets here, you know, to put our tribe in the best light possible. We're the most experienced, so the village picked us, and we need to figure out the details of what we're going to do. Soâ€!"

It took a couple hours to plan that out, and by the end, we were confident that the rest of the tribes would be in awe. Everyone headed to the village, and while I informed Stoick about my conditions for attending the festival, everyone else got to work setting the last details up. I kept scarce until I was needed, because I wanted as little attention as possible on me until the festivities actually started. I knew that my introduction was going to be a fiery one, and I mean that in far more ways than one.

## 20. Chapter 20: Party Time

\*\*A/N-Longer chapter this time, bear with me as it covers a lot. The next couple should be fun chapters too, so as always, read, review, and enjoy!\*\*

\*\*P.S.-Apologies for the longer-than usual update break, school is a lot right now and I've been busy. But there will be a few chapters up rapidly the next couple days.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 20: Party Time</p>

The first tribes (or clans as some of them liked to call themselves) began arriving late the next day, two days before the festival actually began. I kept a low profile, trying to keep from being seen until the banquet on the first day. Good thing Hiccup didn't have a problem with me borrowing clothes every now and then (I actually look good in vests, who knew?) and I kept under the radar for the most part. Unfortunately, one of the first tribes to arrive as they were one of the closest, was the Bog Burglars. When I saw their ship arrive in the port, I instantly sharpened my senses and kept to the back of the village. I knew it wouldn't be long before their cunning heir would be on the loose.

Sure enough, it was only about a half hour later before the telltale sound of soft, clanking metal began approaching. The footsteps were slow and she was trying to keep her weapons from making noise, so I pretended not to hear her until she was about 5 feet away. Just as she was about to tackle meâ€|. .

"Hey, Cami." "WWHHAAAA?!" I smiled and spun around just in time to see Camicazi lose her balance and fall over in surprise. I laughed and took out my sword, readying myself for the sparring I knew she would force me to have. She got up and pulled her sword out too, but just stared at me for a second. "How in the world did you hear me?" she asked. "I'm famous for my stealth, and how did you even know it was me?" I chuckled and twirled my sword. "Don't tell me you forgot already. It's only been a couple weeks," I replied, letting my eyes slowly swirl into a bright yellow color, resembling Nightmare eyes. Cami nodded, seemingly a bit disappointed. "Right, dragon senses." She lifted her sword up and pointed it at me. "So, scale-butt, ready for that match you promised?" she teased. I smirked and twirled my sword again. "Why not? I'll go easy on you since I don't want that much attention just yet. Defeating the infamous Camicazi will put the spotlight on me in a heartbeat." Cami laughed this time. "Beat me?" she laughed. "You know that's not possible, lizard-lips!" "Oh, now you're just asking for it." "Bring it on then!"

It didn't take long for Cami to realize I had gotten better since she had last seen me, as I nearly bested her within thirty seconds of the first round. Of course, however, I let her get the upper hand eventually, and after lasting over 10 minutes against her, I was already drawing a crowd. I sighed and gave Camicazi a warning nod toward the audience. She shrugged and snickered. "I'm not letting you out that easily!"

The spar lasted about 20 minutes, a long time for a friendly practice round, but in the end, we both got stuck in a lockdown. She couldn't hurt me if she wanted to (dragon scales, some are hard enough so as to be like rocks) and I had no intention of hurting her, so we called it a draw. "Good fight," Camicazi said. "You have gotten better. Though I'm still the best." I smirked. "Still as prideful as ever, too. Don't let it get the best of you, though, because that can end up hurting." Her smile faltered as she gave me an exasperated look. I shrugged and smiled, turning to go and find the rest of the teens.

As it turned out, unsurprisingly, Hiccup was in the forge, working at a constant fast pace, since a lot of things tended to get broken during big preparations like this. "Hey, Hawken!" he called when he saw us walking up. "I see you found Cami already!" I laughed. "More

like I made her find me," I replied. That earned a few chuckles. As those two got reacquainted, Toothless and I discussed the remaining details of the festivities to come.

As the sun sank below the horizon, more and more ships began to appear, even though the festival wasn't actually starting for a couple days. Camicazi, being the constant pain-in-the-butt that she is, was constantly trying to steal things, while Hiccup and I ran intervention. Typical her, she ended up succeeding, only to find me standing behind her with my hand outstretched. "You're no fun," she said. I shrugged. "Just trying to keep the peace until the festival actually starts, thank you." I also got to hear some of Hiccup's childhood stories with Cami, and apparently they're pretty well known for having been a nightmare for the villagers, though some were rather entertaining. Once Hiccup even helped Cami get away with stealing Stoick's underpants! Cami was the one having fun telling that story, while Hiccup just turned beet red at the memory. The look was priceless. No wonder Stoick was so uptight whenever the Bog Burglars visited.

As I was listening to the stories however, and the other teens joined us up on top of the watchtower, I heard a rustling behind me, and I turned to find Camicazi rummaging through my pack. "Ooohh, what's this?" she exclaimed, bringing something out of my bag. I was one of the surprises I had brought for the opening night: a firework. Yeah, I know, kind of pointless with dragons around, but still, something they hadn't seen yet. "Hey!" I yelled, lunging for her, "give that back, that's for opening night!" Cami just laughed and jumped out of the way. "You'll have to tell me what it is first!" she jeered back. I frowned, knowing my options were limited on a highly noticeable watchtower, but an idea came up as Cami continued to run in circles around the platform. I smirked. "No, I don't think so," I said, "you'll be giving it back rightâ€| aboutâ€| now!"

I jumped in front of her, making her slow in order to turn the other way, and I uncoiled my whip and lashed it out beneath her, tripping her and making the fountain fly out of her hand. I spun and whipped the rope out again and wrapped it around the stray firework and yanked it back, letting it fall straight into my hand. I smiled as I wrapped up the whip and slipped it back onto my shoulder. Cami stared at me, a bit out of sorts, as Astrid began snickering and clapping. "Bravo, you got the best of her," she teased. "Oh, ha ha," Cami retorted, sticking her tongue out and standing up. Those two always enjoyed picking on each other (probably because of Hiccup's and Cami's long, long friendship, but Astrid being the one holding Hiccup's hand).

Cami brushed off her pants and crossed her arms. "Alright, I'll admit it, I should have seen that one coming," she said, "but can you at least let us in on what that thing is?" "Yeah, looks like something that belongs in my sister's room," Tuffnut snickered, right before Ruff punched him. "Ow, I am hurt, I am very much hurt!" I shook my head at him, and then turned back to Cami. "Are you going to stop stealing my stuff?" I asked. She groaned, but nodded. "Good. This is a firework, an Asian invention. They won't be common around here for a few more years." "Oh, I've heard of those!" Fishlegs exclaimed. "They're like decorative bombs, used for celebrations and stuff!" I smirked. "I'm not surprised you'd know about them. But yes, they're for celebration, so I'm going to set off a few tomorrow, after just about everyone's here." Hiccup raised his hand and started to speak,

but I cut him off. "Yes, Hiccup, I've already talked to your father about it, and he agreed. Actually, he nearly had me set them off now and bring more later. But anyway, I'll be setting them off from the cliff above the Mead Hall, so that should give a fairly good view." Are you serious?" Ruffnut said. I nodded. "Cool. Can we blow something up while we're at it?" "NO!" was everyone's simultaneous reply.

True to my word, the next night, after all but one tribe had arrived, I snuck up to the Mead Hall cliff and set out my array of fountains and mortar shells. Once the sun went down, I started lighting them. As the shells exploded above the village and fountains splayed color across the hill, the villagers gathered below in awe. I smiled. This was a great idea, and what a way to start off everything! Funny thing is, I heard the most cheers when I set off the extra large fountains, rather than the exploding shells. I guess years of fighting dragons kind of puts a damper on seeing fire blowing up above your head. Heh, heh. Maybe they just have a secret appreciation for beauty. However, I think it would have ended better had Toothless not tried to steal the show, blasting off his own fireballs above my head. In any case, I heard a lot of questions floating around between the Vikings as I came down, wondering who had such amazing "weapons", and whether or not they would be doing it again the next night. Good thing the only ones who knew who it was were the Hooligans. Too much attention for my taste.

Hiccup pulled me off to the side after I came back into the village. I guess there were a few things I still didn't know about. "Do you know who Thuggory is?" he asked. I raised an eyebrow. "Who?" "Thuggory." "Oh, him. Yeah, I think I remember who that was. Friend of yours and Cami's right?" He nodded. I shrugged. "Well, what about him?" "He's coming in tomorrow, and I need to make sure he doesn't freak out when he meets you," Hiccup explained. "Is there something we can do to break the news to him? Meatheads are not known for being thinkers." I stood there for a moment, and then nodded. "Yeah, I think I know what we can do. What I'm worried about is the honors ceremony tomorrow. I'm sure your father's going to drag me into showing everyone." Hiccup smiled. "Well, we'll wait until tomorrow to worry about that." I nodded, then realizing what time it was, I bid my farewells for the night and headed home, mulling over the problem with Thuggory. Thuggory is the heir to the chiefdom in the Meathead tribe (named for their habit of clubbing first, asking questions later, more than most. That, and most of them have rather beefy profiles, especially their heads). I shrugged it off as I reached the forest, and after looking around to see if anyone was nearby, spread a pair of wings and glided home.

Like the few days before, I woke up early, grabbed my usual things, and headed straight to Berk. This time, I was glad to see none of the teens were slacking off in the cove like I knew they liked to do, which meant everyone was in the village. I nearly flew all the way into town, then remembered that I was trying to keep a low profile, so I landed in the outskirts of the town and started to walk in.

"Hey, Hawken! Up here!" I stopped, and turned around to see Hiccup and Toothless standing at the top of a small hill. ::We've been waiting for a while,:: Toothless said. ::Hiccup's friend arrived rather early this morning.:: I sauntered up to them. "Oh did he?" I replied casually. "Uh, who are you-oh, right, never mind," Hiccup

said, temporarily forgetting about my speaking terms with the dragons. I laughed. "Don't worry, at least you know the situation. Most people would just look at me like I was insane." He nodded, then waved me to follow him.

We walked down to the base of the hill and cut around behind the village, walking up toward Hiccup's house. Stoick was already out and about, so it was just us teens. "So, just to make sure I have all the facts straight," I said, "Thuggory is the heir in the Meathead tribe, right?" Hiccup nodded. I smiled. "Good. That would be embarrassing, acting like I knew who he was and then forgetting all the facts." "It may be a bit awkward anyway," Hiccup said. "Yeah, well, my superpower is being awkward." We both laughed as Toothless just shook his head behind us.

We reached the back door of Hiccup's house, and Hiccup opened the door, letting first Toothless, then me and lastly him inside. All of the teens were lazing around in chairs around the room, and there was one slightly older looking kid at the other end who I didn't recognize. Hiccup walked over next to him and the boy stood up and shook his hand. "Good to see you, Hiccup," he said. "Same for you, Thuggory. Now, before we start reminiscing, I'd like you to meet my new friend, Hawken." Hiccup held his hand out toward me. I nodded politely as Thuggory stepped up to me. "Well hello then. It's always nice to meet Hiccup's friends, always an interesting bunch. I'm—" he started to say, but I held up my hand and smiled. "No need, believe me. As Hiccup said, I am Hawken, and you are his friend, Thuggory. Heir to the Meathead chiefdom, childhood comrade in arms to him and Cami, so on, so forth." Thuggory raised an eyebrow, then looked at Hiccup. "You already told him all about me?" Hiccup smiled and shook his head, while I heard Cami hold back a snort. "Pleasure to meet you, by the way," I interjected. The twins began to snicker as the rest of the gang held back smiles. Thuggory looked around. "Okay, what am I missing here?" he asked, spreading his hands apart in questioning. Cami laughed and hung her arm around the much taller teen. "Don't worry you'll find out soon enough. Hawken's not from around here, and he's a bit, uh, different." "Meaning?" Thuggory asked. "He already knew about us long before we knew anything about him," Hiccup explained, explaining very little. Thuggory sighed in exasperation. "Okay, seriously, what do you guys mean?" he said. Hiccup gestured to a chair. "It'll take a while, you might as well sit down."

I took a seat across from Thuggory, who gave me the fisheye, but didn't say anything yet. "When we say Hawken's not from around here," Hiccup began, "we really mean it." I nodded. "I'm a local friend, but my home is not Berk." "Where are you from, then?" Thuggory asked. I shrugged. "Another world."

There was silence for a minute before Thuggory burst out laughing. "Okay, very funny, but seriously, where are you from? A tribe from the south? You have that look about you." I shook my head. "No, seriously, I'm from another world. There's an entrance to my home off in the forest, maybe Hiccup and I will show you sometime." Thuggory fell silent for a minute as he thought this over. "Thenâ€œ how do you get here?" he asked. I shrugged again. 'Don't really know. Something powerful opened a doorway between our two worlds." "Like I said, he's not exactly typical," Hiccup said. "You can say that again," Ruffnut laughed. I smiled. "Well, there's also one special thing I received from here, too." "More special than being from a different earth?"

Thuggory questioned perplexedly. I nodded. "Can he keep a secret?" I asked Hiccup. "At least until tonight?" He nodded, and I let out a breath. "Okay, Thuggory, watch closely," I said, and opened my eyes as wide as I could. Thuggory raised an eyebrow, but kept watching.

In a flash, my eyes went from normal bluish green to the bright yellow-green of a Night Fury, and my pupils changed to the oval shape. Thuggory yelped and fell backward. "Boo!" I said, and laughed, then made the next change: black scales formed and flowed down my face and neck, then down my arms. Thuggory almost bolted out the door, but Hiccup and Astrid held him in place. They were both trying to hold back laughs. I smiled. "Like we said, I'm not like the rest."

It was silent for a couple seconds, then everyone started laughing, save for Thuggory of course. "What-what is so funny?" he yelled. "He's turning into a dragon!" Camicazi nodded. "Now you know what I was so shocked about when you last saw me. He says it's a gift he got from someone in our world." Thuggory looked at me again. "Who are you?" he asked. I shrugged and acted exasperated. "I thought we went over this before, but alright: Hi, Thuggory, my name is Hawken, nice to meet you." I extended a black hand out in greeting. Chuckles echoed around the room again.

Just like Cami and everyone else, it took about an hour to lay the story straight. Admittedly, it was a few hours before he was comfortable around me, and it took nearly everyone sitting right up against me to get him to figure I wasn't dangerous (unless I got hurt, but that's a different story), and he simply decided that if Cami and Hiccup could be my friends, so could he. If there's one constant with Thuggory you can be sure of, it's that he will never take being shown up by a girl in anything. The rest of the day was better: more stories about everyone's childhood adventures, jokes and small pranks, and even eating lunch as a group. Eventually, however, late afternoon rolled around, which meant the Berkian gang had a job to do: show off.

"Alright guys," Hiccup started, "time to saddle up! My dad will be expecting us to be in the air any minute now." A couple whoops went up, and everyone called their dragons down as we stepped into the village square. I walked over to Toothless and Hiccup and tapped the teen on the shoulder. "Try not to overdo it, will you? And that includes you too, Toothless," I said. Hiccup laughed as Toothless glared at me. "Don't worry," Hiccup replied, "we'll try to keep injuries to a minimum." I smiled as Toothless whispered, ::I'll keep him from embarrassing himself.:: I gave him a scratch on the head, and turned to look up at Fireworm. "And you try listening to Snotlout for once, will you?" She groaned, but nodded. ::Fine, but if he does anything stupid, I'll be in charge.:: I shook my head in amusement, then floated to the back of the group as they headed for the highest part of the square, and readied for takeoff. As they saddled up, everyone waited for Hiccup to give the signal as Thuggory and Cami stood next to me.

"GO!"

They launched into the air, simultaneously looping around and shooting straight up along a cliff and out over the village in formation. Above the docks, they split up and dove, almost scraping

down the sides of the walkways and out over the water, climbing again and looping around the sea stacks and back toward the village. I watched Hiccup give another signal, and they all began spiraling upward and toward the bare mountain behind the village. Starting with Toothless, one by one each of them dove, Toothless looping around back, and they fired one after another at the cliff, setting it ablaze, and split off and flew out to the sides. Lastly, Toothless fired, sending an indigo ball at subsonic speed toward the inferno on the cliff-side. The fireball exploded, sending a shockwave across the blaze and putting it out, while simultaneously creating a ring of blue around the whole gang.

The gang looped back around and glided slowly toward the village, the dragons flaring their wings and landing together in the village square. As the teens dismounted, the villagers and visitors began gathering around and applauding and cheering. Typical boisterous Vikings, but it still made me cover my ears. I smiled and I and the other two teens walked up to the gang.

"Not bad," I said, putting my arm around Hiccup and giving him a pat on the back. "Keep this up, and you may end up famous." "Aren't we already?" Snotlout boasted. I rolled my eyes and laughed. "Okay, fine, famous for more than the Red Death." I looked back at Hiccup and Toothless. "I think your destinies in halls of fame are un-doubtable now." Hiccup somehow beamed and blushed at the same time, while Toothless got a smug smile on his face. At that point, a large crowd swarmed in, so I excused myself and kept off to the side.

Vikings are big on boasting achievements, so congratulating and storytelling continued after the performance for a few hours, and many of the boisterous Vikings became drunk Vikings (mead is a potent thing). They have a tendency to toast to everything. Hours go by fast, and soon the sun was beginning to set. Stoick announced that it was time for the opening banquet, and so everyone filed into the Mead Hall. Now I know why it was made so big (it's carved into a cave in the side of a mountain, for pete's sake).

When a Viking says a banquet, it's usually by their terms. At least 20 tables were filled with just about everything the Hooligans could put together: fish prepared in about 30 different ways, beef, mutton, fruits from trades and the local gardens, plates and plates of breads and desserts, and, of course, barrels of mead. The banquet lasted for a couple of hours, Vikings stuffing themselves to exploding (most of the teens were a bit more modest) and getting drunk over and over again (a very entertaining sight, really, all these big, hulking men and women dancing around like unbalanced ballerinas and belting out like opera singers with sore throats), and then, almost all at once, all the plates and extra food were cleared away, and we all faced toward the huge fire pit in the center, where Stoick was standing. The honors ceremony was about to actually begin, and everyone seemed to be taking it very seriously.

As Stoick began announcing the beginning of the awards and festivities, all the teens from the different tribes were gathered along one bench, and for anyone who had dragons, the reptiles could be seen lazing in the rafters high above us, save for Toothless who sat alongside Hiccup. I looked to Astrid and Cami, who were closest to me. "Exactly why are we all here?" I asked. Cami chuckled. "The honors ceremony is partly a sort of 'coming of age' ceremony," she

explained, "so all of the teens here are getting their title." "Title?" "Oh, come on, Hawken, think for a moment. You know, like Stoick the Vast, or my mom, Big Boobied Bertha? Our descriptive title, what we're remembered by. I know you're not that dense," she teased. I just deadpanned her. "Gee, thanks." I looked around. "What about Thuggory? He's not over here." "He's already 18," Tuffnut whispered from along the bench. "His ceremony was last year. And no, I don't know why the ceremony is at 17 instead of 16 or 18 like other people," he said, seemingly knowing my next question. I shrugged and turned back to face Stoick.

All the other parts of the ceremony went before the coming of age, which kind of makes sense, I guess, but that meant we were all sitting on the bench for about 2 hours. It was getting late, and I could see some uninterested people in the way back of the crowd nodding off. Many toasts were shared and different tribes were honored, one after the other in each part. As it turned out, in the decided order of recognition, the Bog Burglars came only just before the Hooligans, so anything Cami would be recognized for, we would be just after. Finally, however, it was time for the "Coming of Age" part, and the teens from the other tribes went up and got their titles.

Cami was the last of her tribe to be recognized, being the heir, and so we all kind of zoned out until that point. "The last Bog Burglar we have to honor," Stoick bellowed, snapping me out of my state, "has been well known by many of us for a great number of years. She is known to be an amazingly slippery lass, a perfect spy and escape artist,—" there were a few chuckles at this, "-and has become one of the best young warriors I have ever seen." He motioned for Cami to step up next to him, which she did. "Her title has been chosen, and I give youâ€|. There was a pause for a moment of anticipation.

"Camicazi the Stealthy!" Stoick bellowed. Thunderous applause rumbled through the building, and many cheers of approval were heard. "Good going Cami!" "No surprise she'd get a title like that!" etc. Naturally, Cami loved all the attention, and stood there bowing for a while before she sauntered back to sit down with us again. I smirked and leaned over to her to say, "Congrats, the name definitely fits you!" She laughed. "I've always been hard to hold, so now the whole world can know it!" She grinned as we faced Stoick again.

"Now it is time for our very own teens here on Berk to receive their titles," Stoick said. "First, we haveâ€|..."

Some of the kids I didn't know went up first, then the first of our group, Fishlegs, was called up. "This boy's title will now be: Fishlegs the Wise!" Then we had "Tuffnut the Berserk!" and "Ruffnut the Unyielding!" Those two names seemed to go together, so it fit the twins. Tuffnut's title especially fit him. Snotlout became "Snotlout the Reckless!", which we all decided was absolutely perfect. He was the only one who actually set foot on the Red death in that fight, and everyone was well aware of his brash decisions. He ignored our smirks though.

"We only have a few more people to recognize," Stoick said, quieting down the crowd, "and our next lass has shown a great deal of skill and agility, equal to that of Camicazi, and deadly competence with weapons. Being our second best with dragons, she is also now our

second-in-command in our training classes!" He motioned for said teen to stand up. "I now give youâ€¢..Astrid the Untouchable!"

The cheers rose up, and all of us applauded for her. As she came back to sit down, I leaned over and said, "They couldn't have found a better name for you!" She smiled. Thanks!" she said, and turned to Hiccup, and they shared a kiss. I smirked. "Nice." Toothless nudged her, breaking up the romance. ::Congratulations for such an insurmountable title. You deserve it.:: Astrid looked at me. "He said you deserve the name." She laughed and bent down, giving Toothless a hug and a scratch on the neck. Hiccup opened his mouth, probably to give her a compliment of his own, but before he could say anythingâ€¢.

"And now, we arrive to our last official member of the Hairy Hooligan tribe to honor tonight," Stoick boomed out again from on the fire place pedestal. "This teen holds many records to his name. He was the first of any of us to break the three-century war and tame, as well as befriend, a dragon. He also ended the war for all of us with the Slaying of the Red Death, losing only half a leg in the process!" Loud cheers and whoops echoed through the hall, and Hiccup only shook his head and blushed. I gave him a friendly punch to the shoulder. "You know they have to stretch it out. They're Vikings!" Hiccup nodded and began to say something, but was cut off again. "That boy is now the head of our dragon academy, and is the handler of all issues related to our new allies. Last, but not least, he is my son, and next in line for the Chiefdom of Berk!" Hiccup sighed and stood up, Toothless right behind him, and headed toward the pedestal. Stoick looked at him and smiled warmly, putting a hand on his shoulder.

"I now present before all, my son, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, now to be known asâ€¢.. Hiccup the Great!" At that, the cheers and applause reached overpowering levels, nearly making me cover my ears, but I had to cheer for my friend as well. Then, I stopped and thought about the title he was just given. "The Great?! That is so clichÃ©!" I laughed, unable to clap, for a good two minutes. Then, Stoick's voice quieted the crowds again, announcing an unexpected honor. "Now, quiet down, I have discussed with my council, and we have decided there is another honor to be given. This is for Hiccup's best friend, who has helped us more times than I care to count. It is a bit unorthodox, but he has proven himself to be a part of our tribe, just as much as we Vikings are."

I raised my eyebrow. Who is he talking about? Me? But no, the next move he made was not toward me, but the dragon at Hiccup's side. "Toothless, you have been voted to become an honorary part of our tribe, so we now name you: Toothless the Magnificent!" my eyebrows went up at that. "Honorary Viking, huh?" Astrid, who was sitting next to me now, nodded and clapped. I shrugged. Not that he needs the ego boost, but it fits the reptile, I guess. Toothless, being Toothless, strutted around the room with Hiccup on his back, practically bathing in all the attention the two were getting. I felt rather sorry for Hiccup, as he wasn't really a person who liked being in the spotlight, but he took it well. Finally, Toothless brought his rider back over to us, where Astrid grabbed Hiccup and kissed him again, long and hard. When they broke apart, I smirked and gave a loud whistle, causing the rest of the teens to break out laughing. Astrid gave me a death glare, but after a few seconds, her frown turned into a smile and she started laughing too. But before we could leave the

Fest Hall, it was my turn.

"Alright, alright, quiet down now!" Stoick yelled, making the crowd turn toward him, wondering what was going on now. They had already gone through all of their recognitions, right? "Now, we have one more person my council has voted to recognize tonight. This boy is not a Viking, but in a way in the same sense as my son is. He is not from around here, not really like us at all, but we here in Berk have come to see this person as a great friend and powerful ally, and we have given him the respect worthy of our own warriors." I nearly choked at that. What? Come on, I haven't done that much, have I? "Even though I said he is no Viking, we have already made one honorary tribe member tonight, and shall make another. This teenager-yes, I said he is a teenager- once saved my son from certain doom, at a point when no one else could have prevented it. He also played a major role in ending the feud with the Clobbering Clubswingers, letting all of us make allies of them once again!" A great cheer went up as I groaned. As it died down, Stoick motioned for me to come up. I walked up toward the pedestal, and stood tall next to Stoick (though near him, tall is a relative term). "I now present this ally, and our second honorary Viking everâ€" here he paused for effect, "-Hawken the Powerful!"

Many cheers went up just because Vikings like to make noise, but among all the congratulations, I heard a mocking laughter. As the cheering died down after people started noticing the laughter, everyone turned to see a group of rather sturdy Vikings cracking up in the back. "Powerful?!" one guffawed. "You call him Powerful? He's scrawnier than Hiccup!" They all cracked up again at that. I glared at them. "Right. About that," I drawled, gesturing toward a spare log for the fire, "Stoick, mind if I borrow that?" Stoick shook his head. "Not at all. Here," he said, handing it to me. I grasped it, then took off my whip and pack, tossing them to Astrid who caught them. Then, I stepped up onto the stone rim of the fire pit, garnering the attention of everyone, even the still snickering blockheads in back. I grinned, then threw the log up above my head, pulling my swords out (I had made it a point to get a secondary one after I had discovered Berk). As the log began to fall, I leapt upward, spinning the swords together toward the log, slicing it in two. As I landed, I brought the swords apart and into both halves of the log, slicing it into four equal pieces. They clattered to the ground as I sheathed the weapons, and a number of mugs were heard to do the same.

I looked to the back of the crowd, smirking when I saw the shocked look on the previously snickering men, mouths open wide as a Thunderdrum's. I stepped off the rim and over to Astrid, who handed me my other belongings, then uncoiled the whip and made it crack like a gunshot as a last point. Then, I turned to the group. "You were saying?" I said smugly, coiling the whip again.

At first, there was just a cough, then someone began clapping. It got louder and louder until once again, nearly the entire crowd was cheering. Stoick laughed and clapped a hand on my shoulder. "I don't think they'll be questioning ye again," he said, "but I would also prefer not to keep secrets from our brethren here." I froze, and looked up at him. "What are you suggesting?" He shrugged. "It's time they know about yer gift, as ye call it. Else they'll be thinkin' you're some sort of sorcerer in the competitions later and such." I shook my head. "I don't think that's a good idea. Something like that needs to be done grad-" "It'll be fine, I assure you. I trust all of

their leaders here, and if anyone has a problem, they'll come to me first. Besides," he added, smirking, "I doubt you'd have a problem handling it." I sighed and held up a finger. "One second then."

I turned and walked over to Hiccup. "Mind holding these for me, make sure no one makes off with them, especially that one?" I said, holding out my weapons and pack, and gesturing to Camicazi. Hiccup took them from me, but gave me a questioning look. "What are you going to do?" I groaned. "Your father suggested I show everyone." Hiccup nearly choked at that. "What? This is the same guy who decided some stranger from another world should watch over his son! No offense," he added, but I only smiled. "Eh, I think he knows what he's doing. Besides, if anything blows up, figuratively or literally, he's the one responsible." Hiccup sighed and nodded as I walked back over to the fire pit rim. "To end the honors ceremony-", Stoick bellowed, calling everyone to attention \*\*again\*\*, all of them putting on slightly annoyed faces at the third unexpected addition. I'd later find out additional honors weren't uncommon, but this was the third time tonight!. "What is it now?" Someone muttered, and I found myself nearly agreeing with his sentiments. Stoick cleared his throat and spoke again. "We have decided to finish up with a demonstration of our newest ally's source of power." He paused for a second, then continued. "This, eh, ability o' his is unlike anything any of us have ever seen, so don't overreact, and," he chuckled, "you'll see why I am glad he is a friend. Also, as a warning, if anyone has any reservations against Hawken, may deal with me about it. Deal?" The unanimous "Deal!" was enough to calm my nerves somewhat, but still, these were Vikings we were talking about. I looked to Stoick, who nodded.

I cast a glance at the teens. "Any suggestions?" I asked, to which I got a unanimous "Night Fury!" I laughed and nodded. "Alright, everyone, I need some room here!" I yelled, and the crowd began to move back until I had a very large, open space around me. I decided to make the change slowly, starting by changing my eyes. They grew in size and changed to the nearly luminescent bright green like Toothless', and I heard some of the nearest Vikings suck in a breath. Black scales formed on the tops of my hands, and flowed around and up my arms, then covering my face. My fingers fused together, forming paws with long claws on the ends, and my feet followed. The room went completely silent, save for the Hooligans who were laughing their heads off at everyone's reactions. I smiled. "You haven't seen anything yet," I said, and began increasing my size. I fell to all fours and a tail sprouted behind me, the swept-back fins unique to me appearing in Fury form. Down my back, I felt the crests form, and I flexed them for effect, and last of all, a pair of black, massive wings sprouted, and I spread them up and out like a pair of fans. I wasn't done yet, however, and continued to increase my size until I was twice the size of a normal Fury, 40 feet in length, and a wingspan of nearly 80.

Every mug in the room clattered to the floor, and there was silence for a couple minutes. I smirked. "What? Dragon got your tongue?" The teens behind me burst out laughing as they came to stand next to me. "What're ye laughing at?" someone yelled. "This is not funny; it's one of Loki's tricks!" I snorted and shrank back down to normal Night Fury length. "No, I assure you your reaction is quite hilarious. And I've never met Loki, so I can't be a trick of his." Another chief stepped forward and pointed at me. "Then how did ye do that? It's not natural, and something like you could be a danger to us all!" There

were mumbles of agreement in the crowd. "I am no danger to anyone here, unless you are crazy enough to try to attack me or my friends here on Berk, though the latter is less likely to happen. I am here as a friend, though I doubt many friends can make such a mood shift happen in a crowd like this."

"Maybe it's just an illusion," a man in the crowd muttered. I turned to face him, and walked over. Everyone began backing up as I did, save for the man I was focusing on. He seemed to be rooted in place in surprise. I smiled gently and extended a wing toward him. After he didn't move, I tried lightening the mood. "Really, I don't bite. Unless you bite me first." I heard Cami and Ruffnut start to giggle, as they would bite. Finally, he reached out and gingerly touched my wing. He held his hand there for a second, then stumbled back. "He's real!" the man said. "Well, obviously, I wouldn't be standing here otherwise," I retorted, then turned back to the crowd. "And to answer an earlier question, no, my abilities are not natural, they are supernatural." I began shifting to a new shape, mimicking that of the first dragon I met.

"When I first came to this island, the first creature I encountered was a dragon like this," I said, spreading all four of my main wings. "She is the one who passed the gift on to me. However, my having the power to shift between two races is a bit more dramatic than a dragon with the same ability." There was a gasp in the back of the crowd, and they all looked back at a woman. "I've heard of that dragon," she said. "Tales tell of it bein' able to become an enchanting woman." I nodded and smiled. "The tales are true. She was a sort of translator between groups, sent to make peace with humans and dragons. However, as we all know, she was not the one to end war here," I added, looking at Hiccup, who only blushed. "This 'Mystique,' as the dragons call this species, had the gift in reverse, only able to turn human. These abilities, from what I gather, are passed from one bearer to another over generations, and were started off by a being more powerful than any of us could imagine." "What being?" someone asked. I grimaced. "I'd rather not get into that right now, it's a bit of a religious affair that me and the dragons have in common. I don't want to start another argument here on that subject."

I began shifting shapes again, to the form I found myself in when I woke up in the so-called "Kill Ring," and focused out over the entire crowd. When I finished, I spread out my grayish wings and tail, and said, "This is the form I will be seen in most around here. I know, it's going to startle everyone for a while, but we all might as well get used to it now that everyone knows". I glanced at Stoick. "Thought I'm still not sure how well that's panning out." As if to prove my point, Mogadon, the chief of the Meatheads, stepped forward. "How can we be sure ye will do as ye say?" he asked suspiciously. "There has never been anythin' like this here before, how do we know you're not goin' te be a backstabber like that Alvin fellow?" For anyone not familiar with the HTTYD world, that's Alvin the Treacherous. I focused on him and held out my hands. "I am as clean as the hands I show you now. I hold honors from where I come from that are considered highly respectable and trustworthy, and I saved Hiccup once, did I not?" There were murmurs of agreement around the room. I huffed, and continued. "I am a trusted friend here in Berk, and I can be a friend to everyone here. All I need is your approval. I do not start fights, I do not continue them unless necessary. And, if I can be of assistance in any problem, go to anyone of this village, and they can find me. Can I have your agreement on

that?"

There was silence about this room for a few minutes, and the tension seemed to rise. Then, Bertha of the Bog Burglars stepped forward. "I'll take you up on that offer," she said, and held out her hand. "A friend of Stoick's is a friend of mine." I smiled in relief and shook her hand. Instantly, not to be outdone by a woman, no matter how intimidating she was, the other chiefs and appointed officials came flooding upward to take the agreement, and the Hooligans started up a rolling thunder of applause. I sighed in relief and the end result of the ceremony. It could have gone so much worse.

I ended up stuck in the Hall for a good extra hour, people wanting to ask me this question or tell me about that idea I could try, and it began to get overwhelming. Only when almost every one of them ended up drunk as a skunk was I able to escape. To my surprise, the rest of the teens were already out there, along with the dragons. "What, not much for festivities?" I asked, smiling. Snotlout began to speak, but Astrid cut him off. "We're not much for getting drunk silly. Or at least most of us are, but we're keeping Snotlout and Tuffnut from ending up like they were a couple weeks ago." She shot them a glare, and they both shrank back. "Do I even want to ask?" I said. She shook her head. I looked up at the dragons sitting on the statues. "And I'm guessing it's the same story for you guys?": You don't want to see a dragon drunk,: Fireworm said (Fireworm is Snotlout's dragon, just to make sure that's clear). I smirked. "Right. Anyway, it's about time I got out of there. Any longer and I would have gone nuts!" Cami nodded. "Yeah, Vikings can do that. However, the looks on their faces when you turned into a reptile was priceless!" "The talks that always follow are less so," I countered. ::I don't think they'll look at dragons the same way ever again, though,: Horrorcow commented. I nodded "True, dragons will be different from now on to them," I replied. "Problem is, every time the Hooligans visit any other tribe, and I'm not in plain sight, they'll start trying to figure out which one of you guys is me." I pantomimed one of the Vikings from another tribe. "'Is that him?' 'No, no, that's him, in back.' 'No, you doofus, he's not here, he's staying out of the way up on the hill!'" As the rest of them laughed, I groaned. "It's not really funny, it's going to be a pain in the rear." Ruffnut just chuckled again and replied, "It's funny because it's not us that it'll be happening to." I gave her a deadpan glare. "Thank you, for that vote of confidence."

As they wore themselves out, I looked up to see the moon already high in the sky and groaned again. "Oh, great, I'm late. My mom's going to kill me!" I gave an apologetic look as I moved down the steps of the hall. "I'll see you guys tomorrow, alright?" They all replied in a unanimous "See ya!" and waved. I waved back, then jumped up into the air, powering up with my wings, and aimed for the cove.

The flight back to the portal was quiet and uneventful, but when I landed and walked through, I was met with a different story.

"Where have you been?" My mom snapped from the steps of the back deck. "I had half a mind to come and find you just now! I said come home in the evenings, not at 11:00 at night." I sighed and stepped up on the deck. "The ceremony took a lot longer than I had expected," I explained. "Vikings have a thing for making merry and dragging things out, you know." "No, I don't know," my mom said, "and I wish you had told me, so I could have at least expected something like this."

"Sorry," I muttered. My mom just shook her head as we stepped into the house. My dad was sitting on the couch, and gave me a look as I walked in. "It's alright, I already talked to him," my mom said, then she turned back to me. "Since it took so long, how did the ceremony go?" I shrugged. "The tribes all did their typical honors, you know, bravery, special recognitions, giving of titles, that sort of thing." "Titles?" I sighed. "You know, like Stoick the Vast, or Gobber the Belch? Their honorary title." "Oh," my mom replied. "Anyways," I continued, "Toothless and I were made honorary members of Berk's tribe, meaning we got titles along with the rest of the teens."

I could see a smile playing along the edges of my mom's lips. She was going to tease me about something, I knew it. "So what titles were you given?" I fidgeted a bit. "Well, uh, Hiccup is now Hiccup the Great, and there's Astrid the Untouchable, Toothless became Toothless the Magnificent-which kind of fits him, at least-and I was dubbed, uh, Hawken the, uh, Powerful."

I was right. As soon as I said what they had labeled me, she started laughing. "I can see why they might call Hiccup what they did," she snickered, "but they gave you a title like that?" She laughed again. I sighed. "Yes, I know, they're pathetically clichÃ© names, but it's not like we get to select our titles. Besides, there's a pretty good reason they called me what they did," I said, spreading the pair of wings I still hadn't gotten rid of. My mom's laughter died down to a few chuckles, but she was still grinning. "Alright, fine, I'll stop. Anything else happen?" I nodded and scratched the back of my head. "Yeah, uh, you can blame Stoick as it was his idea, but the rest of the tribes know about my, uh, abilities."

The mood changed very fast. My dad looked over from the couch and asked. "How'd they take it?" "Better than I had hoped," I said, "which is saying something. But I fear there may still be some suspicions." "Gee, I wonder why," my dad replied. I shrugged. "They were apprehensive at first, but we managed to talk them into tolerating me at the least." There was silence for a minute, then my mom looked back at me. "Any idea how to break the news here?"

"What?" she shrugged. "I mean, it's going to happen at some point right?" she said. "You'll be going back to school in about a month or so." I groaned. "Don't say the "s" word, please. And I can control the abilities, if that's what you mean. I don't randomly morph on chance. Plus, I want to try to keep myself out of the spotlight for as long as possible, so that's my plan: someone will find out, but I'm hoping for a gradual introduction to the world." My mom didn't like that idea much, but she waved it off for now. "We can deal with it when the time comes, I guess. Get some sleep, as I'm betting you'll be having a busy day tomorrow." I nodded as I moved toward the back of the house. "Yeah, tomorrow's mostly trading, but there's supposed to be some competitions, and I'm sure the teens are expecting me to be there." My mom nodded. "Well, good night!" I smiled. "Good night."

I had no doubt that at least Astrid and Camicazi were expecting me to participate tomorrow, and I wasn't expecting to let them down, but I wasn't certain if I really wanted to express what I could do like that. I shrugged and headed off to bed. Tomorrow I would find out just how Vikings performed tournaments, and just how hard it is to keep up sometimes.

## 21. Chapter 21: Knockout

### Chapter 21: Knockout

The day of the fighting competitions, I made sure to have a big breakfast to keep my energy up, and headed off to the village. I had been asked by a couple people whether or not I was going to participate in the competition itself, and I didn't want to disappoint, and I wanted to make a point.

To keep up my status of being hard to find and secretive, I traveled inside the village as a common species, the Terrible Terror. Rather quickly, I crossed out the possible places to find Hiccup and ended up heading to his house, where, surprisingly, I found both him and Toothless still snoozing in their room. It wasn't extremely surprising, as it was still early, but Hiccup was the Chief's son, and Toothless was famous for being an early riser, waking up with the sun to drag Hiccup out to go flying, generally being an all around pain. I slipped in through Hiccup's window, and silently glided over to land on Toothless' head.

::Hey sleepy head, get up already!:: I barked in Dragonese (yet another late discovery: not only could I understand the dragons, I could speak like them if I wanted, something I had found out only a day or so before). Immediately, Toothless' head shot up and he started looking around the room, somehow not noticing me balancing on his head like a hat. ::Who's here? No other dragons allowed in Hiccup's room!:: I bent over and looked straight at him, grinning. ::Except for me!:: I teased. He shook his head and yelled. ::Hey! Get off, who do you think you are?!:: I jumped off and landed on the floor, looking up at one very grumpy Night Fury. ::Tsk, tsk, such a temper. Come on, Toothless, you know exactly who I think I am,: I said, still grinning like a maniac, not at all perturbed.

There was silence for a moment, then Toothless' jerked in surprise and blinked, eyes widening. ::Hawken?:: ::The one and only!:: Toothless shook his head. ::When did you learn to speak Dragonese?:: he asked. I shrugged. I was the only one who knew about it at that point, what with the discovery being so late in coming. ::Eh, rather recently, actually. Surprise, surprise, surprise!:: I turned to Hiccup, who was still sacked out on the bed. ::Takes a lot more after his dad than he thinks, doesn't he?:: I remarked. Toothless snorted. ::Now you know why I usually have to drag him out of bed to get him up,:: he replied. ::Well, now it's my turn,: I said, spreading my wings and flapping up to land on Hiccup's bed. ::By the way, don't you think it's kind of strange you were still asleep? You're usually up at the crack of dawn.:: All I got in response was Toothless' signature grin. Right.

I hopped up onto Hiccup's chest, who just moaned a bit in response. I shook my head, smirking. Kid could sleep through an earthquake. Just like his dad.\_ I leaned in close and put my face an inch from Hiccup's, and yelled, "Waky waky, eggs and baky!"

Hiccup's eyes snapped open. "Boo." "AAAAAHHHHHHH!" He jerked upright as I jumped off and landed at his feet, looking like he'd just seen a ghost. Breathing rapidly, Hiccup stared down at me. "Whatâ€¢ in theâ€¢ worldâ€¢." I laughed. "Yes, a very good morning to you too."

Hiccup shook his head. And rubbed his eyes, then glared at Toothless, who was desperately snorting and squirming as he tried not to laugh. After a couple of seconds, he failed. Hiccup shook his head again. "I swear, Hawken, you have the worst forms of greeting I have ever known. You're going to give me a heart attack someday." I shrugged. "Yeah, yeah, yeah. From over here, it seemed rather funny. Besides, I scare you enough times, you won't be startled by anything soon." Hiccup just sighed and yawned. "Aren't you a bit early?" he asked. I shook my head. "Actually, the black couch potato over there failed to wake you up this morning, so I took the liberty of doing so myself. It's actually about 8:30." Hiccup gave me a confused look. "Couch potato?" I laughed. "One of my culture's ways of describing a very lazy person. And we all know Toothless fits that bill." ::Hey!:: Toothless growled, while Hiccup and I just laughed.

"Anyways," I drawled, "it's way past time for you to get up. If I'm correct, the competition should be starting somewhere between half an hour to an hour from now. I'm betting you'll be wanted down there." Hiccup froze, in slight panic. "Not to compete, right?" he asked worriedly. I smirked at the look on his face. "Yeah, everyone is expecting the fishbone to fight against mountain men." He gave me a deadpan look. "No, not to fight," I said, "just to watch your friends compete. I know Astrid would be ticked if you weren't there." Hiccup sighed in relief. ::Do we get to compete?:: Toothless asked. I twisted my head to look at him over my wing. "Afraid not, mainly for safety. You'd be more likely to hurt someone or get injured yourself. You are allowed to watch, though," I said. He looked a bit disappointed.

"Back to present matters," I began again, jumping off Hiccup's bed and gliding over to the window again, "I'll meet you outside, Hurry up." As I exited the window and Hiccup got out of bed and headed over to his dresser, I took on a different form, very large and snakelike with dull violet wings and a slate blue body. \_This ought to give him a good second wakeup call,\_ I thought, and chuckled. I coiled in the arches above Hiccup's front door and waited.

After a couple of minutes I dozed off. He was taking a long time to get ready. After about 20 minutes or so, I awoke to the creaking of the door below, and Toothless exited first, bounding down the hill to snatch a few fish out of the dragon's bowl in the court below. "Wait up, Toothless!" Hiccup yelled as he walked out, closing the door behind him. "We're not all built for speed, you know." As he stepped away from the door, I lowered my head down right behind him and let out a low, venomous hiss. He spun around, yelled, and promptly lost his balance. "AAAAAHHHHH! Whoa-oh-oh-aaAAAAHHH!"

Before he could hit the ground, though, I shot my head forward and wrapped it behind him, catching him and pushing him upright. He used me to stand back up, and dusted himself off. Then he gave me a dangerous glare. "Is that all you can do? Sit around and think up ways to scare me? Come on, at least scare Toothless or even Snotlout occasionally." I laughed and shrugged, sliding down and coiling up next to him. "I did this morning. Besides, it's one of the things I'm good at. It's kind of a natural talent after dealing with little sisters on a daily basis." He just crossed his arms and drummed his fingers. I sighed. "Fine, I'll let up for a while." "Good. I've probably lost 2 years of my life just now." I shook my head. "Not likely. Hey, how about we prank Snotlout and Tuffnut later today?" Hiccup smiled and nodded. "It's about time they got to be the butt of

the joke, what with those pranks they're always pulling." Just the week before, Snotlout had managed to convince Gobber that aluminum would make a great pair of underpants. Gobber hadn't forgiven him since.

"So what exactly are you?" Hiccup asked as we traveled down the main village street, where I was getting a number of perplexed glances, on the way to the Training Ring. "I mean, I've never seen a dragon like that in the Dragon Manual." I snorted. "That's because Ampitheres aren't an Old World species," I replied. "They come from South America." Hiccup glanced up at me. "Another strange land we don't know about around here yet?" I nodded. Hiccup looked back at my wings. "Never seen a dragon with feathers before either." I just laughed. "It's more common than you'd think, actually, especially in the imaginations of people where I come from." Hiccup nodded in understanding.

A few minutes later, we reached the bridge connecting the Training Ring to the main village. Originally called the Kill Ring, it was converted into a training ground and stadium, and occasionally, as it was when I first came to Berk, a jail. "Hey, look! It's Hiccup!" This time I laughed as Hiccup got a look of panic on his face. Luckily, it was just Snotlout. He came jogging up and gave Hiccup a slap on the back. "Yer here to compete too? I didn't think you'd have it in you!" Hiccup sighed as he rubbed his back. "Thanks for the vote of confidence, Snot. I'm just here to watch, though." "Oh," Snotlout said, getting almost a look of disappointment on his face, before it brightened up into a goofy smile. "Oh well, you can watch as I win then! I'll beat every one of them, with my face," he boasted, getting into the best macho stance he could. Then he looked at me, towering above him. "Where did that dragon come from?" he asked, confusion written on his face. I leaned down to look eye to eye with him as confusion turned into concern and then panic. "I guess it's true what they say: you are dumber than you look," I retorted. "I'd say you know exactly where I came from." Hiccup chuckled as Snotlout's look of panic melted into realization and then annoyance. "Hey, how was I supposed to know? You usually only walk around half-dragon, he protested. "Oh, put two and two together," I replied. "This isn't a dragon from around here, and besides Toothless there, I'm the only one following Hiccup to the Training Ring." Snotlout puffed up his chest. "Fine. But it still doesn't tell me why you happen to be fully dragon right now." "Didn't realize there was a problem with that," I retorted, amazed at how dense Hiccup's cousin could be sometimes, for someone who was related to an inventor. "You know," I continued, giving a nod to Hiccup, since he'd probably be the only one who would understand this remark, "it is better to stay quiet and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt. I want to be a dragon, and so that's what I'll be."

I turned and started heading toward the ring again, Hiccup and Toothless following. "Wait!" Snotlout called, running to catch up with us. "What do you mean by 'remove all doubt'?" he yelled. The other three of us exchanged glances, then started giggling. "It's what you just did right now," Hiccup said. Snotlout continued to look confused. "In other words," I said, still chuckling a bit, "you have just proven yourself to be a fool." ::It ain't the first time, either,:: Toothless remarked. "I am not a fool," Snotlout snapped, going a bit red. "So says the person who once thought he could rip off dragon legs with his face," I shot back. "Augh! I don't have time for this," Snotlout snapped again, waving us off and marching toward

the ring. "I need to train." He marched on at a brisk pace, while we just watched him leave, before he then stopped, and slowly turned back to look at us. "Wait, do you guys know who all is competing today?" he asked. I smiled mischievously. "I know one competitor," I said, "me." "What?!" yelled Snotlout. "That's not fair, you're not a Viking! You can't compete! Even if you could, you have an unfair advantage!" I just smiled. Hiccup stepped up. "Actually, Snotlout, he was named an honorary Viking last night, if you remember. Therefore, as long as he stays in human form, yes, he can compete. Toothless is a Viking now too, but he's a dragon, so he's not allowed." Snotlout just stared at us. "O-kay, I really need to, uh, go train," he said, then turned and ran to the ring. "Would it make you feel better to lose if I only used one hand?" I yelled teasingly. Hiccup laughed as we continued to the ring. I noticed a few large benches, like stadium seats, had been moved to sit around the arena, as the competitions would go a lot longer than the former dragon classes did.

We reached the ring and peered inside, watching a number of contestants, including just about all of the teens, practicing and squaring off. Directly beneath us were Astrid and Camicazi, facing away from us and, amazingly, not fighting. Instead they were actually discussing something civilly rather than squaring off. "Well, there's a surprise," Hiccup commented. "I've got an idea," I said, and dipped my head down through the bars. "Oh, here we go again," Hiccup remarked above. I slid up right behind the two girls as Toothless started snorting at an attempt to stay quiet. Unlike Hiccup, he always liked scaring people.

"They need to work on their backswing," Astrid was saying. "Definitely, Camicazi replied. "They're pathetic! They can't even perform a reverse tumble properly!" She laughed. "This'll be too easy!" I decided this would be a perfect time for me to make my presence known. "Don't be too sure, we're not all incompetent," I stated loudly, right behind and between the two.

They both jumped and spun around, tripping over their feet and promptly falling over. Hiccup and I burst out laughing, Toothless giving up on his attempt to stay quiet too. "Don'tâ€| do... that!" Cami yelled. I just smirked. "Why not, it's fun! Lesson learned though: pay attention to everything around you, not just the idiots in the ring." "You're really asking for it, Lizard Breath," Astrid snapped, but she couldn't hide the smirk on her face, so I knew she was able to take the joke. She glanced up at the snickering Hiccup, whose eyes suddenly widened. "I'll get you too, you know," Astrid said. "I'm innocent!" Hiccup replied, a smile on his face still.

"Anyways," I began casually, sliding the rest of my body into the ring and coiling up by the wall, "I believe this is a first for me, you two actually having a civilized conversation instead of trying to kill each other." "What, we can't be normal, civilized people every now and then?" Cami asked, raising an eyebrow. "We always have to be polar opposites?" I shrugged, or at least as best as an animal without shoulders can, and shook my head. "I didn't mean that. You guys just always seem to enjoy the clanging of swords over conversation more." I finally began shrinking down to my normal self, since the competition would be starting soon. "So, you two know how long before the fights begin?" "About 15 minutes," Astrid replied. "Why, are you competing?" I smiled and nodded. "I might be." "Well, then may the best warrior win," she replied, and stuck out her hand.

I shook it, and Cami placed hers on top. "I plan to," she said teasingly. 'Good luck though!' Astrid and I both just shook our heads.

Everyone started heading out of the ring to the stands outside, and the spectators began filling the seats. Hiccup waved, and both Astrid and I waved back. "Wish us luck!" Astrid yelled. Hiccup nodded, and then turned to find a nearby seat. "I will!" Toothless added in a comment of his own. ::Don't hurt anyone too badly!:: I laughed. "I'll try not to!" Then I jogged over and joined Astrid and Cami on the competitor's stands.

The first few rounds were between people from other tribes, so I had no clue who they were. However, not going first gave me a few advantages: first of all, I was able to find patterns and common techniques that the winners used. Second, I found out that while we weren't using wood or other soft material weapons, but metal instead, the edges and points were dulled, anything that could puncture or slice blunted. It would still leave a nasty bruise if I got hit with them though (I wasn't too worried about injuries in any case, as dragons heal impossibly quickly).

Eventually, it was time for my first round. I walked down and entered the ring first, then turned to face my opponent. And an opponent he was! Easily over 6 feet tall, muscular but not fat, and he had a gleam in his eyes that suggested he didn't lose often. He swaggered into the ring, and looked down at me. A hideous grin broke across his face. "This is all I'm up against?" he guffawed. "Yer nae even the size o' a good sword! This'll be too easy!" He grinned and walked over to the weapons rack, and as if to emphasize his point and drive the insult home, picked up a broadsword nearly as long as I was tall. I smirked and shrugged off the remark, and followed his example, grabbing a sword nearly as long, something I should not normally have been able to pick up, spinning it up into the air and catching it by the handle as it came back down. "What, you didn't attend the awards ceremony?" I tossed back. He shook his head. "It's only a waste o' time. I only go to that if I'm getting' an award. Ain't no point else wise." I only shook my head. "Then this'll be only too easy for ME." "You?" he belted out, laughing. "Yeah right! Ye'll be lucky tae end up in th' healer's house when I'm done here."

Stoick yelled out to get into positions, and both of us stepped to the middle of the ring and faced each other. The ring of a bell sounded, signaling the start of the match. The man glared at me. "Let's begin." "Gladly," I replied lightly. With that, he swung the sword at my side. I ducked and rolled, and the speed the man swung it caused him to nearly fall forward. When his sword stopped moving, I stepped forward and dropped my sword down on his, pinning it in place. I looked up at the Viking, who had a look of surprise on his face, but he quickly shook it off. "You really should attend, you might learn a few things about your opponents," I said, smirking. "Now," I continued, "let's really begin." The man stood up straight, anger burning in his eyes. "Why you little-!" he heaved his sword straight up at me. I simply lifted mine, one-handed for effect, and stopped it mid-swing. Then, I slid my sword down his and slammed him in the chest, sending him stumbling back. "Things, aren't always what they seem," I teased, letting my eyes flash Night Fury green. The Viking glared at me, and took another swing, this time trying to bring the sword up under mine. I ducked back as he fell forward, forgetting about his momentum. As he passed me, I place my sword

across his legs, and he fell to the ground with a crash. I leapt forward, landing next to his head, and as he rolled over to get up, I swiped my sword down, sending his own spinning away, far out of reach. I let my eyes change color again, to a brighter yellow, and looked down at my opponent. Then, I placed the tip of my sword (it was blunted, remember) on his chest. At this, the bell rang again, signaling a winner, and the crowd cheered. My opponent looked up at me and my neon eyes. "Who are you, to be able to fight like that?" he asked incredulously. I laughed and stuck out my hand to help him up, which he took. "The name's Hawken, but people around here call me the dragon boy." He nodded, then smiled. "Well, you won fair and square. I won't be called a bad sport, so congratulations." I nodded. "Good fight."

The rounds went on like this for the next couple of hours, each round getting just that much harder. Sad thing is, only once did I actually get hit, by another mountain of a man who, from what I heard, had fought alongside Stoick in many battles. It left me with a sprained right wrist, but true to the draconic side of me, there was barely a bruise left after 15 minutes. Finally, though, it came down to the last four competitors, and it was quite a shock to see who came out on top: all people I recognized, and all of them only relatively recently given their Viking titles: Thuggory, Camicazi, Astrid, and me. I guess being young and spry pays off. Cami and Thuggory went first, and the round lasted a good ten minutes, but eventually Thuggory made a mistake and went down, and Cami wouldn't let him back up. I knew then, she was in the final round. No surprise, for someone as slippery as her.

Then, it was Astrid's and my turn. "Hey," I said as we headed for the weapons rack, "just to let you know ahead of time, if I've gotten this far, if I'm gonna win, I'm gonna win." Astrid just laughed and picked up her signature weapon, an axe, as I grabbed a smaller sword. "In your dreams, Draco!" she retorted, still laughing jokingly. "Then I must be dreaming," I countered as we both stepped to the center of the ring, laughing. The bell sounded, and we were off! Astrid was by far the quickest and most accurate opponent I had gone up against, and it was difficult to find an opening. She landed a couple hits on me, nothing more than bruises though, unlike the mountain of a man who sprained me before. She would dole and swing, and I would block and parry, and then she'd somersault to the side to slash at me, and I'd spin out of the way, no one gaining the upper hand yet.

Eventually, though, it had to end. Astrid began to tire, and as I spun and brought the sword toward her, she ducked, and slipped. I took the opportunity, driving my sword toward her axe, sending it careening across the ground. Astrid stood up, breathing as if she'd just run a marathon, and nodded, smiling even still. The bell rang and Stoick called me as the winner, and as with every other round, the crowd cheered. "Hey," I said, hanging up my sword and walking back over to Astrid, "you did well. Heck, you're part of the top three, and nearly got me a couple of times.. Congratulations." I held out my hand, and she shook it. "Thanks Hawken, especially for actually trying to beat me," she said, smiling. "Just do me a favor, okay? Kick Cami's sorry butt for me, will you?" I laughed. "You sure are competitive with her, aren't you?" I chuckled again. "Don't worry, I'll do my best. Besides, I let her beat me once, and I'm not letting that happen twice." Astrid laughed. "Alright. Well, I've got to go find Hiccup now." I nodded. "Keep the kisses to a minimum, will

you? I can't fight with the distracting sound of smooching nearby." I grinned. "Oh, shut up!" she said, giving me a playful punch on the arm, then running out of the ring and up to Hiccup. Sure enough, they both engaged in a long, heated kiss. I heard Toothless snicker quietly, behind them, and I just shook my head before walking out of the ring for a "rest" before my round against Camicazi the Stealthy.

After about 15 minutes of sitting on the competitor's stands for what everyone thought would be a "well-needed rest" (dragon stamina; who needs rest?) a horn sounded, signaling me to head into the ring. I stepped inside and grabbed my trademark sword, and turned. I pranced Camicazi, showing off her famous agility as she cart wheeled over to the weapons rack. Interestingly, she grabbed a sword as well, though I guess it fits her size better (hee hee). She turned to face me. "Ready to lose, Lizard Breath?" she taunted. I laughed. "You never quit, do you?" Cami just twirled her sword nonchalantly. "You do what you do best, right? You know, if you don't like it, you can always forfeit now." She smiled deviously as I just snorted. "Not likely."

A bell rang up above, and Stoick stepped up, yelling out, "Take your positions!" Cami and I both headed to the center, and stood about 10 feet apart. "Now quiet down everyone!" Stoick yelled, and the crowd hushed. "Today is a historic day! Here are the final competitors for this gathering, and for the first time ever, both are our newly minted Vikings!" A cheer rose up, and Stoick held out his hands to quiet them down again. "The opponents are: Camicazi the Stealthyâ€|" She thrust her sword high as the crowd cheered, "â€| and Hawken the Powerful!" I held up my sword as the crowd cheered again. "The winner of this match," Stoick continued, "will be named top fighter for this year!" The audience cheered on again. "As we all know, this is a great honor, and for the final competitors to be just proclaimed Vikings last night, it is unprecedented! Now, may the best Viking win, and let the fight begin!"

A bell sounded again, and the crowd roared. Cami and I looked at each other, and raised our swords. "May the best one win," I said, smiling. "I plan to!" Cami said cheerfully. With that, she took two steps toward me, and jumped. "HHYAAAAHH!" I sidestepped as she brought her sword down right where I was, and she spun and brought her sword up at me. I met it with my own, and slid it down her sword in an attempt to slam both to the ground. "A bit slow today, aren't we?" I taunted. "Not likely," she snapped, and slid her sword out from under mine, spinning to gain speed and bringing it down toward my arm. The only problem was, my arm was no longer there, instead being above her head by then, and I brought my own sword down toward her back. She rolled out of the way and lifted her weapon, the swords meeting with a mighty BANG!

"So Scaly's getting' faster, is he?" Cami queried. I shook my head as I somersaulted out of the way of a lightning-fast swipe, which ended up just slamming into the ground. "Nope," I said, "I'm just bringing out my better side." CLANG! "So you're saying you let me win two days ago?" CLASH! "Yep. That's exactly what I'm saying." BASH! "Yeah, right. I don't believe it. You're not going to win this round, Dragon Butt!" SCHWANNGG! I rolled behind her and brought my sword back around to hit the back of her knees, knocking her to the ground. Cami, being Cami, was just quick enough to spin and land on her palms, and push herself back up, just barely blocking my swing to

take out her legs again. "That was cheap!" she yelled. I shrugged, blocking her again at the same time. "Hey, you win how you can! All is fair in love and war!" At this, her eyebrows rose up. "Oh, really? That's how you're going to play, huh?" She charged at me.

"Whoa!" I barely sidestepped in time, and as I did, she spun, expecting that move, and hit me across the chest with a sidelong blow. Using the momentum of her charge, she spun completely around and leveled her sword at me. I took a step back to regain space, and hit a wall. At that point I realized I had backed up against the side of the arena. Cami smirked. "What you gonna do now? You're luck's run out!" She clashed her sword against mine, and while I was still sorting things out, she spun it out of my hand and tossed it behind her. Cami looked back at me. "What do you say now? Give up?" I looked to either side, back to her, then smirked. "I say I see you on the other side!"

Spinning and catching Cami off guard, I jumped up, using the wall as leverage to get high enough to back flip over Camicazi's head, landing right next to my sword. I picked it up and spun, just blocking a blow and meeting Cami's blunted blade with my own. I heard a few cheers from above, along with a couple of chuckles. Upon hearing this, Cami went beet red. "That's it, you are so dead!" she snapped, and began swinging her sword fast enough to make it whistle. I dodged or blocked each swing, slowly letting Cami get angrier and angrier, to the point of boiling over, and therefore becoming less and less coordinated as she went, using a lesson my father had taught me years before.

Finally, a few minutes later, Cami stopped for a split second to breathe and readjust herself. It was all I needed. I rushed forward, grabbing the hilt of her sword while knocking the blade away from my face with my own sword. Twisting it out of her hand, I backed up and leveled both swords at Cami. "Another lesson you need to learn, apparently," I said, smiling, "never let anger get the best of you. You will always lose."

The winning bell rang out, and the crowd exploded into cheers and applause. I lowered the swords, and Camicazi nodded. Stoick stepped up to the ring. "We have a winner! As our new top fighter of the year, I give you Hawken the Powerful!" I sighed at hearing the clichÃ© title, but I was drowned out and my eardrums nearly burst from the applause that followed. Cami stepped forward and gave me a friendly slap on the back. "Alright, you beat me fair and square," she said. "I guess I have to say congratulations!" I laughed and gave her a friendly hug, much to her dismay. "And to you too," I said, letting her go. "That was a good fight." "Eh, you know me, I ain't goin' down without one!" All this time, we were sauntering toward the arena exit, and the second I stepped out, I was swarmed by a huge crowd of Vikings.

Suddenly, I found myself getting tossed into the air (or that's what it felt like) as they congratulated me, and then I found myself being carried across the bridge and through the village. The gang trailed behind me, giggling and thinking I couldn't hear them, but I glared back at them, and they shut up for a few seconds. Let me repeat: a few seconds, because soon afterward they burst out laughing again at the ridiculous sight of scrawny me being hoisted through the village like a prize. Finally, we reached where I guess the destination was, and they set me down in the town square, where Stoick was waiting

with Gobber.

"Well now, lad," Gobber started, "now tha' ye've won the title o' top fighter, ye get to pick a brand new weapon! Take a look." He stepped back and displayed the assortment of weapons and tools to choose from. "Why do I need this?" I asked. "Part of the tradition," Stoick said. For a minute my mind went blank, but then an idea popped into my head. I looked over the display, but didn't see anything close to what I had in mind. I looked up at Gobber. "I've got an idea of what I want, but I don't see it here. Mind if we go down to the forge, real quick?" He nodded, and while Stoick gave the announcement that I had chosen my weapon to somewhat distract the crowd, I followed Gobber, motioning for Astrid, Cami, Hiccup and Toothless to follow.

"So what was it ye had in mind?" Gobber asked as we neared the forge. "I'm looking for a set of four swords," I replied. Gobber gave me a strange look. "Why something so commonplace?" I shrugged. "It won't be when I'm done with them." He shrugged, and went into the forge. There was much rustling around and clanging as various tools fell to the ground. Hiccup sighed. "You know I'm going to be the one picking those up, right?" he asked. I shrugged an apology. "I know they're in here somewhe-a-ah, there they are," Gobber said, emerging from the shop with four identical, gleaming swords. I nodded. "Perfect. Now I just need something very pointy." Gobber handed me a large metal needle. I nodded, then turned to Toothless. "Can you heat this up for me?" I asked. He gave me a strange look. ::You can breathe fire, can't you? he asked. I shook my head.:: "That's not the point," I said. "I'm making somethingâ€|" I looked over at the three teens, and dropped my voice, "â€|something for all of us, and since you can't wield a sword, I need to involve you somehow." ::Oh, alright, I get it,:: Toothless replied. I held up the needle, and carefully, he heated up the tip until it was red hot.

I got to work carving on the hilts and lower blades of the swords, and hiding each one behind Toothless to keep the others from seeing them. "What are you doing Hawken?" Astrid queried. I just smiled. "You'll see. Patience, patience." After each sword, Toothless heated up the needle, and soon, I was done.

"Hiccup, put out your hands." He stepped forward and held out his hands. I placed one of the swords in his hands, and he raised an eyebrow. "Why?" he asked. I laughed. "Hold on for just a minute, and you'll see. Don't look at it yet. Astrid, Cami, you too." I gave them each swords, and held onto the last, my newest addition. "Now, turn them over, and look at the blades," I said. They did, and immediately noticed and recognized the drawing on each blade. Hiccup spoke first. "It's Toothless!" he said, smiling. The other two nodded in agreement. ::Let me see!::: Toothless said, and ran up to me. I tilted the sword so he could see. On the blade was a carving of Toothless' head, complete with big eyes and ears. ::Not bad.::: I smiled. "Well, I've been practicing a lot. Now everyone look at the handle." They did, and gasped in new recognition. "Theseâ€| these are our names," Cami said. I nodded. When she was last here, I had taught the three of them enough of my written alphabet and language for them to recognize their names in English writing, and I had learned the runic alphabet. I had written each of their names on the hilts of the swords in both writing styles. "You're right," Astrid said. "Hawken, whyâ€|" I held up my hand. "Think about it. What have the five of us here become in the past couple months?" I gestured to the three of

them and Toothless. "We are friends, good friends, and I have a feeling we'll be seeing each other a lot as time goes on. So, what I've given each of you is a symbol of that friendship. Toothless is carved on there to represent him as well, and all the names are written in the same style, in the same places." I smiled. "Since they're swords as well, they'll be a reminder wherever we go not only of our new friendship, but of what we are, and we proved it today: warriors, fighters, even if in our own different ways. So what do you say: friends?" I held my sword out.

For a minute there was silence. Then Hiccup held up his sword, followed by the two girls, and Toothless raised his wings. "Friends!" we yelled simultaneously, clashing the swords together as Toothless shot a bolt of fire up. Then we all high-fived and slid the swords into the scabbards they came in. I smiled. Something told me that symbol would mean a lot more as time went on.

The rest of the day went on rather uneventfully, as it was also the day for trading, and come evening I headed home for the night. Stepping in through the sliding door, I yelled, "I'm back!" Unsurprisingly, Holly came rushing around the corner. "Did you win?" she asked. I nodded. "Yay! Was there a prize for you?" I smiled. "Yeah, another title for the Vikings to call me by." She shook her head. "No, that's not what I mean, like a trophy or something." I smiled. "Yeah, but I shared it with my friends there too, so we all won." I brought out the sword and showed it to her. "Look close." She did, and her eyes widened. "It's Toothless!" she squealed. I laughed.

For a little while, I continued to show and tell Holly, but what I didn't know was that I was setting myself up for another complication the next day. But for the time being, I just worried about getting to bed. I needed the rest, because tomorrow were the main competitions: the races, and there would be an extra bit of fun to be had as well.

## 22. Chapter 22: Shadow Racing

\*\*A/N-Last chapter for now, and the last fun one for a little while yet, we have some down time before the next major event. Only 14 chapters before Book 2, but there's a lot yet to cover!\*\*

\*\*As always, read and REVIEW! Your thoughts are appreciated.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 22</p>

Shadow Racing

CREEEEEAAAACKKKK!

Ah, the unmistakable sound of my door being opened very slowly. I opened one eye in a slit, and thought I saw my mother standing there, looking in. I can't believe that I'm 17 and she still does that occasionally! Of course, barely opening your eye often leads to mistakes in determining what you're really seeingâ€|.

WHUMPF! "AAAAHHHH!"

I jolted up, completely awake now thanks to my little sister dive-bombing me on my bed. "Wake up Hawken!" she yelled. I sat up further and rubbed my eyes. "Why, Holly?" was all I could muster. "Did Hiccup put you up to this? Because this sounds like something he would do." She shook her head. "No, but he and Toothless are both standing outside the back door, waiting for you." I raised an eyebrow. "Okay, remind me of what I'm forgetting here today. What was I supposed to do?" She rolled her eyes and shrugged. "I don't know what you were supposed to do, but Hiccup mentioned something about races today."

I blinked. "Jeez, how could I forget that? Holly, out of my room, I need to get dressed!" She smiled, and painstakingly slowly meandered toward the door. I finally got fed up and just pushed her out, then grabbed a change of clothes.

After I got dressed, I grabbed a couple of bananas, pears and a breakfast burrito and stepped outside. Sure enough, Hiccup and Toothless were there, waiting. Hiccup was sitting in one of the deck chairs, as Toothless lay nearby in the grass, rolling around and having a good time as the dogs chased his tail. "I see you're using the invitation I gave to full advantage," I said. "You could say that," Hiccup replied, standing up. "Of course, when you don't show up at the time you said you would, I kind of feel the need to come find you. Come on, let's go, we're already a bit late." He turned and stumbled for a second. "Still getting used to the prosthesis?" I asked. He shook his head. "No, just can't feel anything down there, of course."

The sliding door opened again at that point, and we turned to find Holly stepping out, a pleading look on her face. "Oh, no," I muttered. "What, Holly? We're kind of in a hurry." "Can I come with today?" she asked. "I want to see the races, and I haven't been to Berk in a couple weeks." Hiccup and I exchanged glances of equal dread, and I turned back to Holly. "Look, I really think it's best if you stay home until the gathering is over," I answered. "I'm not exactly free to watch a little girl all the time and there's a lot of people there right now that I don't know well enough to trust around you, okay?" Holly just made a pouty face and crossed her arms. "I'm 10, okay? I can watch myself." I raised an eyebrow and smirked. "Oh really? Then how come you can't stop me from doing this?" I darted forward and picked her up, tickling her mercilessly. "Ha ha ha ha hahahahah! Stop, please, hahahahaha!" she screamed, wiggling and trying to squirm away. I set her down and she stood back up. "Come on, please? I'll stay right by you the whole time," she pleaded. I rubbed my forehead. "Holly, I said I can't stay with you constantly, and Hiccup and Toothless can't either because they'll be busy too." I turned and winked at Hiccup. In reality, due to their strong bond and natural speed, they had been cut from the dragon races just to give others a chance. I looked back at Holly, who smiled mischievously. "Mom said I could," she stated.

I glanced past her and into the open door, where my mom was sitting at the table, reading the newspaper and smiling. "Mom, really?!" I snapped. "This isn't really the best day for this, we're going to be all over the village today." She shrugged. "Can't let you have all of the fun, and besides, Holly hasn't gone in a little while. I think you need to let her go with you, as you two also need to spend more time together." I glared at her, then sighed, defeated. If there was

one thing I would never do, it was win an argument with my mother. "Fine," I said, then turned to my sister, "but Holly?" "Yes?" "You will do exactly as I say, when I say it, so you don't get in the way, alright?" She looked at me quizzically. "I thought everyone trusted us." I shook my head. "There's more than just the Berkians here today, remember? And Vikings are people who like to enjoy a good fight, and act before they think. Plus, there are weapons everywhere. It is not a child-friendly place, so that's why I say listen, alright?"

Holly looked down at the ground. "Okay," she said. "Alright, then we need to go," I said. "We've wasted enough time already. How long before the races start?" I asked Hiccup. He stood thinking for a moment, then looked back at me. "About half an hour, give or take. Probably less with how long we've been yapping here." I sighed, and we raced across the yard and into the portal. On the other side, Hiccup mounted Toothless, and I focused on the image of a Monstrous Nightmare. When I looked back at my tail, I smirked. "I guess some things never change," I remarked sarcastically. Along my back were the usual Nightmare spines, but true to my form, were curved back more, and the tail-tip of the back sail was split in two and curved backward. "Well," Hiccup said, "at least we know now how not to confuse you with anyone else." I shook my head in amusement and looked at Holly. "You wanted to come, so get on already!" I said, motioning for her to climb up my shoulder. "We don't exactly have time to chat and mess around now." She nodded, and for once, did what she was told. Finally, the four of us lifted off.

"This is so cool!" Holly yelled, smiling like a maniac as the wind rushed past her. ::She never gets used to it, does she?:: I said to Toothless. ::Do you blame her?:: he replied. I laughed and grinned. ::Nope!:: Hiccup looked from me to Toothless and back again, confusion written across his face. I motioned toward Holly, and he smiled and nodded, knowing exactly what we were going on about.

A few minutes later, we landed down near the docks. The boat race was first, so there was no point flying to the village square and walking down through the whole village. Of course, we got a few irritated yells from a couple of Vikings who had to move so we could land, but they quickly shut up as Holly got off and I changed to my usual half-form, glaring at them.

"Hey, look! They're back!" Hiccup and I turned to see the rest of the gang strolling down the dock we were on. "Took you long enough, where have you guys been?" Cami asked. I shrugged. "Sorry, we had a short delay, pun intended, courtesy of the little girl here," I replied, giving Holly a sidelong glance. Holly glared at me, understanding the prod, but before Cami could ask anything, Holly's face brightened and she rushed past her. "Astrid!" she yelled, running up to the shield maiden. Astrid smiled and bent down, giving her a hug, then ruffled her hair. Hiccup and I glanced at each other. "Girls will be girls, I guess, huh?" I drawled. Hiccup nodded. "Though that's not something you see often from Astrid, you have to admit," he replied.

"I'm sorry," Cami announced, getting a little irritated, "but did I miss something? Who is that little girl anyway, friend of yours?" I shook my head. "Sorry, Cami, I forgot you haven't met her yet, since she's only been here when you weren't around," I apologized. "That is the most annoying being you will ever meet, also known as my little sister, Holly." Cami smirked and glanced at the twins, who were

getting into another squabble. "Siblings, gotta love 'em. She doesn't seem so bad, though." I laughed. "That's because you're lucky to meet her on a good day. She just came off of a flight on dragon back and her newest best friend is right here." Camicazi nodded. "I see. Anyway, the boat race is about to start, so what say we find a more suitable place to watch, eh?" she asked loudly, turning to the rest of the gang. "How about the point?" Snotlout yelled back. Everyone nodded, and I leaned toward Hiccup. "Well whaddya know? Snotlout actually came up with a good idea," I whispered, and we both started snickering. Snotlout gave us the fisheye, but then just ignored us like he usually did.

We headed up toward the point, a rather flat bluff overlooking the harbor. To get there by foot, we had to traverse the Cliffside walkways, but luckily Hiccup didn't have any mishaps on the way up like the last time, and Astrid and Holly kept each other busy, so my sister wasn't in my hair the whole way up. It still scares me how well those two get along, though. Maybe Astrid could teach Holly a few things when she grows up.

When we got to the point, there was already a large gathering there, but a large space opened up when we arrived. I guess that's what you get for being the best fighters around (that's saying something, considering we were surrounded by people who fought for a living). Everyone was able to get settled down, and below, the boats lined up at the starting line by the eastern dock. From what I had gathered from Hiccup and Fishlegs (always helpful when you're trying to find the facts, of course), each boat had a crew of the 12 best seamen from that boat's tribe, and was decorated with the tribe's colors. The objective was to row across the half-mile harbor and through the sea stacks along the outer edge, then across the open harbor again to be the first to cross the natural finish line: a sandbar lining the western edge of the harbor. Rather simple in ideology, really, so naturally the entertainment for everyone was really to see which boat would veer off course or tip over first, which of course always led to loud verbal punches and sputtering or splashing, leading to more confusion and therefore, more entertainment. When I heard that part from Hiccup, I immediately decided that Vikings were a lot like high schoolers.

I looked to my left to see Holly and Astrid sitting together, discussing something about hairstyles, and to my right was Toothless and Hiccup. Lout, Legs, Thuggory, and the twins were further down, but I noticed something a little unnerving: someone was missing, a rather mischievous someone. "Hey, where didâ€¢!" I began, but then I stopped. There were small footsteps approaching slowly, and even for my hearing, comparatively quietly, from behind me. I decided not to say anything, as that would ruin my upcoming fun, so instead I waited patiently as the footsteps got closer, until said person was right behind me, and stopped. I spun around.

"BOO!" I yelled. "AAAAAHHHH!" I swear Camicazi jumped five feet in the air and hovered for a few seconds before falling unceremoniously to the ground. I doubled over laughing. "Jeez, I was supposed to be the one scaring you!" she yelled. I just continued laughing, and I heard Hiccup and Holly joining in. Must have been a very humorous sight. "Ya gotta remember, Cami," I said, wiping the tears from my eyes, "that I hear a lot better than the rest of your friends do. You're never going to be able to sneak up on me," I continued with smirk. "I will find a way," Cami muttered. "I swear, I will find a

way if it's the last thing I do."

"You two never lose your charm, do you?" I heard from behind me. I turned to see Astrid grinning. "Hey, that's my line," I pouted. "I know," she countered, "and that's why I used it. It fits the situation perfectly." "Ha ha, very funny," I retorted. "You and Cami are a lot more alike than I thought."

Just then, a horn sounded from below. "Hey, the race is starting!" Holly shouted. Cami and I edged forward to watch, and as it turns out, Vikings can actually be very fast, at least when in boats. In no time at all, three of the teams; the Bog Burglars, the Hooligans, and a tribe from a place the Vikings call Freezing to Death (now you know where that line at the beginning of the movie comes from) were a good 20 feet ahead of the rest, and nearly halfway across the harbor, and all three were tied. "Aww, come on," I heard Tuffnut complain, "we always come in third." Snotlout pushed him over. "We win sometimes, we're not losers." Tuff smirked. "Oh yeah? That was seven years ago. We haven't won since." "Well, if you'd quit complaining all the time, maybe there would be less drag from your mouth," his sister retorted, smacking him upside the head. "Look who's talking, dragon butt!" Tuffnut snapped back, throwing a punch at her. As a result, Ruffnut elbowed him in the side, and another fight began between them.

I sighed and stood up. "Be right back," I told Hiccup, gesturing toward the fight, and walked over to the equally matched, newly minted dirt wrestlers. I bent down, grabbing them by the back of their shirts, and yanked them apart. The looks on their faces, being held up by someone who should normally be shorter and weaker than either of them, was priceless. "Knock it off, would you two?" I hissed, banging their helmets together. "You two never quit!" I then unceremoniously dumped them back on the ground. "You know, I'll never get used to how strong you actually are," Tuffnut commented. "That's because you're as skinny as a twig," Ruffnut replied. Tuffnut, in reaction, restarted the fight, but a few seconds later, they both shut up, noticing they had slightly blacker helmets and that I had wisps of smoke escaping my lips. I shook my head and sat back down by Hiccup and Holly, and resumed watching the race.

Not long after, the boat belonging to the Meathead tribe began to veer off course, and just after re-entering the harbor as well, and the mayhem began between the crew members. Laughter went up around me like wildfire as they ended up overturning the boat, and God help me if I happened to join in as well. What can I say, seeing 12 burly Vikings trying to clamber back in their boat was funny! In the meantime, the three leading boats had all crossed halfway back across the harbor, each continuously gaining and losing 2 or 3 feet at a time. "Come on, faster, faster!" I heard Cami yell. "Don't let the boys beat you! Go, go!" I looked at her with amusement. "Enthusiastic much, are we?" I teased. She barely gave me the courtesy of a quick glare before fixating on her enthusiastic "encouragement" for her team again. Meanwhile, Ruff and Tuff were yelling such helpful things as "Go! Row Faster" and "Beat the other guys!" and the like. Fishlegs, at the other end of the spectrum, was sitting there analyzing mistakes and techniques and going on about stats and how they could improve their speed. He leaned toward Hiccup and said, "If they increased the rowing speed by one cycle per second, they could gain, like, plus five speed!" Hiccup, for once, wasn't really paying attention, and actually more interested in the race itself compared to the ideas Fishlegs was rambling on about. I threw Fishlegs a

helpful comment as well: "Making sure the boat hulls are completely smooth would decrease drag as well," I said. Fishlegs' eyes brightened. "Good idea Hawken! We should take that to the ship builders, so that maybe we could guarantee our success!"

"Come on guys, who needs science when we've got power!" Snotlout butted in, giving us strange looks. "Our team just needs to get stronger and we'll be faster!" I just gave him a deadpan glare. "Congratulations, you did it again Lout," I snorted. He raised an eyebrow, confused. "Did what, prove my awesomeness? Of course I did!" I shook my head. "No, removed all doubt, that's all." Snotlout sat there, thinking, as I heard snorts of laughter from Toothless' direction. Finally his mind connected my remark to yesterday's show of ignorance, and he gave me a glare. "Hey! That's not funny!" I shrugged as I caught the smiles from the faces of Toothless, Hiccup, and Holly, who all had heard and understood my reference. "I guess it just depends on you point of view. Seems to me it's four against one here, so I guess I am just a little bit funny."

Snotlout shook his head. "Well maybe you are funny, whenever you look in a mirror, dragon butt!" he shot back. I gave him a bored stare. "Really? The oldest comeback in the book? Of course then again you wouldn't even know it's in the book since you don't read that often." I turned to look over my shoulder, where I was currently without a tail. "Plus, currently, at this point and time my rear end is about as draconic as your complexion, considering there seems to be such a close resemblance." At this Snotlout turned beet red and everyone within earshot started snickering. I shook my head and smirked at Snotlout's expression. "Maybe one day you'll learn. Then again, maybe not."

"Hey, look!" Tuffnut yelled, breaking the tension. "They're almost at the finish line!" We scrambled for a new viewpoint and spotted the three leading boats, still in about a tie, and were within a hundred feet of the finish line. As they drew closer, tension mounted in the competitive people around me. The Burglar's boat eased forward, then Freezing to Death's boat, then the Burglars again, then the Hooligansâ€|. Twenty feetâ€| tenâ€|fiveâ€| the Hooligan boat eased forwardâ€|.

"WE WON!" the teens screamed. "The first time in seven years!" Astrid yelled. "High five!" She raised her hand and gave a five to Ruffnut. Holly hugged her, and Astrid hugged back, kind of breaking the air of excitement, but oh well. "Congratulations, I hope you win again next year," Holly said, smiling. Astrid laughed and ruffled her hair. "Thanks, we'll try," she said, then turned and gave Hiccup a hug. I shook my head. "Like peas in a pod, you guys are," I remarked, smiling, and turned to Hiccup, who was also caught up in the excitement. "We should work on designs for next year," he was saying. "Longer, faster, smootherâ€|. We could guarantee winning!" I laughed and clapped him on the back. "Good to see you're not completely off your rocker today," I commented. "Do they get medals or something?" Hiccup smiled and nodded. "Not right now, at the end of the day once all the races are over," he said. I nodded. "How long before the next races?" "Oh, just a couple minutes. The next few are mainly for the teens: sheep lugging, obstacle courses, so on, so forth. I'm not competing, as I never win those anyway." I gave him a friendly push. "Oh, don't berate yourself like that," I said. "There's other things you're good at." He shrugged, and we turned to join the rest of the teens.

The next few competitions were actually really entertaining. Watching a bunch of teenagers carrying big fluffy sheep around or getting knocked over by the flying obstacles is rather comedic, but eventually, all I could think about was lunch. Luckily, that was right after the teen competitions (just a heads up, Snotlout won the sheep thing, and some kid I didn't know named Dogsbreath won the obstacle course). We all headed up to the Mead Hall for lunch, and on the way, I noticed Toothless looking a little disappointed.

"Something wrong?" I asked him. He looked up. ::What? Oh, no, nothing.:: "I can tell something's on your mind by the look on your face. What's wrong, did you want Astrid to win?" He shook his head. ::No, that's not it. I don't get why Hiccup and I can't compete in the dragon race.:: I nodded and smirked. "Oh, come on Toothless really? You get to compete in the other competitions afterward. Everyone knows you and Hiccup are the best team, and you're the fastest species of dragon. Think of it as winning before you even have to try. They're just finding who's second place. Get the idea?"

Silence for a minute, and I caught Hiccup looking between the two of us, eyebrow raised. Toothless stood there thinking for a minute, and then perked up. ::Never thought of it that way before,:: he said. ::Yeah, I can understand that.:: I smiled. "Just don't let it go to your head."

"He's down about not being able to race, huh?" Hiccup asked. I nodded. "Good to see you're starting to catch on," I replied. "Yeah, so he seems to like the idea of winning without trying better." Hiccup nodded. "He's always been a bit of a pushover." ::Hey!:: he snapped. We laughed and headed into the Mead Hall, where the rest of the teens were already sitting at their usual table. "Come on," I said, "let's go get something to eat. I'm already a twig, and I don't want to get any skinnier."

The dish of the day, luckily, was roasted chicken, rather than the lamb or fish they always had, and Hiccup and I both grabbed plates and headed over toward the teen table. On the way, I watched Hiccup struggled to drag over a bag of fish for Toothless. I smiled and walked over. "Need some help?" I asked. Hiccup smiled. "Yeah, still can't do this one-handed." I chuckled and grabbed the handle, lifting it up and carrying it over to the table. Astrid looked over her shoulder and said, "Hey guys! What took you so long? Grab a seat before someone else does." She scooted over and Hiccup sat down next to her, while I took the seat next to Camicazi, who was nearer to the boys at the end of the table than Astrid, Holly, and Ruffnut. Mind you, I was sitting at the end of the table due to my occasional need for more space than most people. Of course, I'm not always the one taking up too much space.

"Hey, Hawken, you're taking up my seat! Scoot over!" This was coming from the mouth of Tuffnut, who was currently lying across the bench seat, taking up as much of the seating space as he possibly could. I just sighed and spread my wings, shoving him completely off the bench and onto the stone floor. "Ow! I am hurt, I am very much hurt!" he complained, as I just sent him a deadpan glare. "Watch who you're talking to before you make a comment like that, hypocrite," I snapped, and then turned to Cami. "You'd think they would learn," I said. "Eh, you have to remember, that is Tuffnut we're talking about," she replied. "Good point."

It only took a few minutes to finish up lunch, and most of the other teens grabbed mugs of mead as we stepped out of the hall. Hiccup, Astrid and I declined, wanting to stay alert for the competitions, and of course Holly is too young even by Berk standards. We wandered down toward where the race would begin, and sat down, much to the chagrin of all the dragons. There were still like 40 minutes before the race, but apparently the reptiles could be extremely competitive, especially when it came to speed, and they were all overly eager to start, some more than others.

"Thorn, would you cut it out?" Astrid complained. "There's still more than half an hour before the thing begins! We've got a while to wait." Thorn ignored her and continue nearly pushing her over. ::Why wait, we can just race now! Come on, I want to fly!:: Thorn complained. Astrid looked at me for help, silently asking me to shut up the overenthusiastic dragon. I obliged, standing up and striding over to the Nadder and smacking her across the snout. ::Ow! Hey, what gives?:: she yelled, glaring at me and raising her tail spikes. ::Quit being so selfish,:: I hissed back. ::You're not the only one here, and you need to understand other's needs to a break every once in a while. Calm down and have some patience, or I might just take your place for Astrid.::

Thorn stood there, shocked, for a couple of seconds, then shook her head and replied. :Sorry, I was getting worked up. I'll wait,:: she said sulkily, then went to go lie down next to a nearby tree. Astrid gave me a look of thanks, but asked a question completely off the subject. "Since when did you learn how to speak Dragonese?" she asked. I laughed. "Oh, since about three days ago. I'm surprised Hiccup didn't tell you yet." At this, she turned to Hiccup, looking for an explanation. "You knew?" she asked. Hiccup just turned red and held up his hands. "Hey, I only found out yesterday, and it's easy to forget something like that, especially where Hawken is concerned." Nonetheless, Astrid punched him in the shoulder. "Agh! Always with the hitting! Why- " "That's for not telling me," Astrid said, scooting closer to him. "But I- " Hiccup was cut off again as Astrid grabbed him and gave him a long, hard smooch. "That was for being honest," Astrid said, smiling. "Get a room!" Cami yelled playfully, and we started laughing. Astrid gave her a glare, but couldn't keep the smile off of her face. ::They do that way too often,:: Toothless commented. ::Jealous?:: I asked, smirking, which just elicited a glare from said dragon. I smirked again. ::Just kidding. I agree.::

After a little bit, we settled down again, and just sat relaxing on the hill above the starting line. Of course, with a group like ours, silence never lasts long.

"Hey, Dragon Boy!" I sighed, and looked up at the source of the voice. "Yeah, Cami?" The asker wasn't surprising, but the mildly serious look on her face was. She got up and sat down next to me, a questioning look on her features. "I was just wondering about the abilities you have," she said. "I know you're able to turn into a lot of different kinds of dragons, but do you think there's actually a limit to the types you can become?"

Hiccup turned around, obviously interested in the answer. Fishlegs also turned, seeing a chance to learn something new, as always. "I'm surprised that question hasn't come up until now," I chuckled. "And

to tell you the truth, I don't really know if there is." "Do-do you think you could turn into, like, imaginary dragons as well," Fishlegs asked, "like, make one up and turn into that?" "That would actually be pretty cool," Hiccup commented. "There wouldn't really be a limit as to what you could do!"

I sat there for a minute, thinking. Then an idea popped into my head. "You know, I think I have a way to test that question," I said, standing up. "First of all, how much time before the race?" "About twenty minutes," Astrid replied. I nodded. Alright, follow me," I said. We headed down the hill toward a currently unused home below, and went in. Toothless also slid in with us, but the other dragons had to stay outside, and they watched through the windows.

"Why are we in here? It's dark," Holly said, grabbing Astrid's hand. I smiled. "If my idea is correct, it's the perfect place to test out becoming a dragon unlike any other," I said. "You remember what I told you about the Shadow Dragon?" Holly's eyes immediately lit up. "Yeah! Do it, do it!" I laughed, and looked around at the other teens, confusion written across their faces. "If you don't mind me asking," Thuggory said, standing near the corner, "What in the world is a Shadow Dragon?" I grinned mischievously. "There's a story I like to read back home, a made up one about the island of Berk, and the author came up with an enemy called the Shadow dragon. It's solid black, with red eyes, and spines along its back." "Sounds awesome," Tuffnut commented. "You don't know the half of it," I replied. "It's even blacker than Toothless, and even has black fire, which actually takes away light rather than makes it." "You should terrorize my brother with that," Ruffnut commented, grinning. "He hates the dark." "Who says? You're the one afraid of the dark," Tuff shot back. "Guys, we get it, and I don't even know if it will work," I said. "Anyway, there's a reason for the strange fire, and that's because of this dragon's most unique ability." "Which would be?" Astrid asked, getting tired of my long speech. "The Shadow dragon can literally dissolve into and travel through darkness, through shadows, hence its name. Therefore black fire creates more places for the dragon to travel unseen. Plus," I added, drumming my fingers together ominously, "it can control the shadows, making them physical elements. And last of all: you can't kill the absence of light, you can't kill something not there. So how would you kill a Shadow Dragon? Only with another Shadow Dragon."

"So, If you can become it, you can't be killed?" Fishlegs asked, eyes wide as saucers. I nodded. "Something like that." "Well, what are you waiting for?" Cami snapped impatiently. "Try it out already, see if you can or not. We're wasting time just blabbing away." I snickered and nodded. "Very well, here goes." I focused on the description I had read, thinking first about the pitch black scales.

Nothing happened. I focused harder on the same image, and still it didn't work. I tried focusing on other details, but no, nothing. "Uh, Hawken? I don't think it's working," Astrid commented. I sighed. "I guess there is a pretty narrow limit as to what I can do. Or maybe it's only dragons that have pictures to go with." I turned to the door. "Well, that was a waste of..." I trailed off as a new idea formed. Every time I focused on any other image, it had always been of the dragon as it normally was. The author had stated Shadow Dragons almost never fully solidify themselves, and stayed in their element. Maybe that was the trick: it was a shadow, so I had to focus

on it as a shadow. I turned back and focused again, this time not on a solid image, but a ghostly mist of an image instead.

There was a slight tingle across my arms, and they began to turn black from my fingers to my shoulders. It was a black unlike anything I had ever seen in real life, as deep as the bottom of the sea, dark as the depths of a cave. Already I felt as if the light in the room was diminishing, and the scales were only barely forming. Soon I was coated head to toe in anthracite scales, and focused on the wings and tail. My body elongated as the tail whipped out like a hyperactive vine, and the wings sprouted out and flared behind me, much like a Night Fury's wings, but more elongate and almost tattered looking, the edges dangling down like shadowy tendrils. The tail and my back were lined with rearward curved spiny crests, and my tail tip ended with a pair of swept back fins, though shaped more like scythes than fins. My neck elongated and my arms and feet formed talon-like claws. To complete the picture, my head elongated much like a typical western dragon's, but with sickle-like horns at the back and sharp ridges running the length of my head. My eyes, when I caught my reflection in a mirror, had changed to a deep, almost glowing scarlet, with coal black all around.

There was silence in the room as everyone, including myself, stared in shock at this new form. I even heard the dragons outside go silent. "That isâ€|. So freaky," Astrid stammered, an awestruck smile crossing her features. From behind me I heard, "Hey Hawken, that would be perfect to scare Dad with." I had nearly forgotten my sister was also in here too, as she was being really quiet. She commented again. "You look like something out of a bad dream." "Thanks," I replied, "that makes me feel so much better." "Hey, who said the good guys can't be frightening as well?" Hiccup asked. I shrugged. "Good point." "Can you make the black fire too?" Ruffnut asked. I raised an eye ridge, and then turned toward the empty fireplace, aiming for the center.

FOOOOSSH!

The room instantly darkened, and in the fireplace, practically outlined in what looked like deep ultraviolet purple, were anthracite black flames dancing in eerie silence, sending flickering shadows all around the room. "Now THAT is cool," Cami commented. "Yeah, and it's a whole new fire color!" Fishlegs said, getting excited. "We should document it somehow!" I smiled, and another idea popped into my head. "One last thing to try out guys," I said, grinning mischievously. "Nobody leave the room, alright?" At hearing this, I saw Hiccup get a really anxious face on. "What are you going to do, Hawken?" he queried. I laughed darkly. "Oh, nothing much, just see how well this dragon's abilities work."

I directed my focus on the shadows dancing around my feet, and watched as the edges of my wings and tail began to shift and dissolve, turning into a black smoke screen. Soon I was completely a cloud, intangible, with the glowing red eyes. This ought to be useful if we ever have any problems again, I thought, then began to sink into the shadow at my "feet," letting my eyes be the last thing to disappear.

Suddenly, I felt connected to the entire room, able to reach into every darkened corner or crevice as the black fire dimmed the room. I heard Snotlout say, "That was freakishly cool!" but then Astrid

brought some sense into the group. "You guys realize that considering everything else Hawken said about this dragon is true so far, he can do anything with the shadows in here?" Hiccup nodded and gulped. "Yeah, and we all know his love for scaring the heebie-jeebies out of people."

They all went silent with this realization, and Toothless began searching the room. ::Hawken, where are you?:: he whispered. I shifted myself next to him. ::Just about everywhere,:: I whispered back. He jerked to the side and looked around. ::Seems to work just fine,:: he said. Please don't scare me. I chuckled quietly. ::Don't worry; you and Hiccup are out of this game. Everyone else, however:: Toothless grinned in expectation.

Just then, I noticed Snotlout starting to shuffle over to the door. "Uh, you know guys, I think I'll, uh, wait outside, it's uh, starting to get stuffy in, uh, here," he stammered and reached for the handle. I reached down into the door's shadow and slammed the door completely shut, locking it as well. Everyone jumped back, Snotlout falling on his rear. "Did you see that?" Tuffnut asked, eyes wide. They all nodded, and I decided to make sure they knew I was still here.

"I'm surprised the 'big, tough Viking' was the first one to try to leave," I sniggered, my voice echoing from all around the room. "Come on, Snotlout, you're really scared of me?" He stood up and crossed his arms. "No way, I, uh, just need some, uh, fresh air," he stuttered. Everyone chuckled nervously, and started looking around the room again. "Seriously, Hawken, where are you?" Hiccup asked. I solidified a shadow rope at Snotlout's feet and wrapped it around his leg before dissolving it. Snotlout squealed like my sister and leapt in the air while everyone looked down at the ground where he was standing, as the shadow repositioned itself properly. "Looks like you're not so tough after all," Cami teased, but I couldn't leave thee score uneven. I positioned myself around her and poked her in the back of the leg, sending her squealing across the room. "You don't seem to be one to talk either," I joked lightly, then focused on Hiccup, speaking right in his ear. "Don't worry, I scare you enough," I said, watching him flinch away for a second. "You're exempt from this fun." Hiccup smiled in relief, then whispered, "Astrid."

The fun lasted for a few minutes as I got better at controlling such an unorthodox ability, all of the teens getting their fair share of squeals and screams, including my own sister, of course, but eventually I decided that it was time to quit. The race would start soon, and I didn't want to be accountable for the forfeit of the teens.

"Hey everyone," I said, "look up." They did, and stepped back very quickly as I rematerialized from the shadows on the ceiling, becoming a solid creature again and dropping silently to the floor. As I slowly changed back, Astrid commented, "That was... pretty cool, I'll admit. Funny too," she said, smirking and sending a glance over to Cami, who just crossed her arms in reply, trying to hide her own smile. I nodded. "I think we've got a pretty solid new tactic in case anything happens again, huh?" Everyone nodded. "Yeah, it's perfect for sneak attacks," Fishlegs said. "You seem to have, like, plus 30 stealth in that form!"

I smiled and shook my head as I regained my original half form, and

looked at Holly. "Keep this one a secret for now, though, okay Holly?" She crossed her arms, but nodded. "Fine. I still think you should scare dad though." "Hey Hawken?" I turned to face Astrid. "Yeah?" "Remind me not to tick you off, alright?" I smiled. "Don't worry, you're in my good book." We laughed, then turned to head out the door.

As I guessed, the competitors were lining up at the starting line, and seeing this, all of the teens ran over to their respective dragons. I noticed, however, that Camicazi still didn't have her dragon with her yet. I turned to her, grinning knowingly. "So, mind if I ask when Stormfly will be joining us?" I asked. Cami stopped walking and turned, spluttering, to face me. "Buâ€œ howâ€œ. How did you know aboutâ€œ?" she stammered. "Iâ€œ I haven't said a thing about—" I raised my hand, cutting her off. "Ya gotta remember I'm not from around here. I know a lot about things here I normally shouldn't." Cami crossed her arms and pouted. "Gee, fine, go ahead and ruin the surprise. I guess I should call her out then?" She sighed and turned to face the mountains above Berk, and gave out a high pitched, almost screaming whistle that echoed off the cliffs.

Up above, a happy roar sounded: ::FINALLY! I've been waiting two days now!:: A bright flash of gold appeared at the peak, floating toward us in an almost twisting, serpentine fashion. When it landed, there was a collective gasp of awe from everyone save me and Cami.

::She's so... beautiful,:: Toothless whispered. I was close to him so I reached over and smacked him upside the head. ::Ow!:: he yelped, turning to face me. "Get a hold of yourself and maybe I won't do that," I replied curtly. He growled a bit, but stayed quiet.

"Everyone," Camicazi began, "meet my dragon, Stormfly." Everyone issued a collective "Hello," and then Stormfly did something in reply that shocked the socks off of everyone else. "Pleased to meet you," she said perfectly, turning a slight shade of pink as she bowed her head. Everyone jumped in shock and stepped back in surprise. Cami and I exchanged a quick glance, and burst out laughing. "What in the world?" Hiccup squeaked. "I taught Stormfly how to speak our language," Cami explained simply. "Her species is one of the few able to do so." As she explained this, I saw Stormfly shoot Toothless a flirty grin, and I snapped back to reality. "You realize I can see you," I announced, crossing my arms and giving her a glare. Stormfly jerked, flushing pink, then her scales quickly transformed to a deep shade of purple. "I wasn't doing—" "Your scales are purple," I deadpanned. Stormfly stopped talking, blinked a couple times, then looked at Cami, scales flashing a number of colors. "Who is this guy?" she asked. "I thought only your tribe knew about my kind." Cami smiled innocently and shrugged. "Remember the boy I said wasn't exactly from around here?" Stormfly nodded, still confused. "Well, Hawken here is from another world, so he knows a lot, almost as much as we know." She gave me a sidelong glance. "And, there's one more thing," she added, nodding to me. Everyone smiled now, waiting for the reaction we would get from Stormfly, who was now flame red in exasperation and confusion, not having a clue where her rider was going.

I whistled to get Stormfly's undivided attention, then began changing, spreading a pair of golden wings. This was enough to give

the moody dragon a start, but then I became covered in gold scales, my body elongating to match Stormfly almost perfectly. "Whaâ€| what the?" Stormfly exclaimed, falling backward and turning bright white. The rest of us fell back too, but laughing instead. The reaction is always the same, but never gets old. As I change back, Stormfly stepped slowly up to me, eyes wide.

::Soâ€| you're the successor to the Mystique?:: she asked quietly. I nodded, and a large smile crossed her face, or at least her best imitation of one. ::Well, this is definitely a change of pace. I got to meet her once, but never thought a human would be the next in line.:: I shrugged. ::Things work in strange ways, I guess,:: I replied. Stormfly turned a happy shade of gold again, and sat back, looking around at the rest of the teens. "You are so lucky to be friends with him," she commented. I shook my head. "Alright, that's enough gushing, it's not that big of a deal." "Ummmm, pardon the interruption, but what is all of that about?" Astrid asked. I sighed, rubbing my forehead. "Do I really have to explain this again? Fine. The little gift I have is a big deal to some dragons, apparently." Astrid nodded and gave a glance to Stormfly, who just turned pink again, then to Cami.

"Alright, new question: what kind of dragon is Stormfly?" she asked, "And why do her scales change color?" Cami just laughed. "Oh, she's a mood dragon. Different colors mean different emotions. The ones I've seen so far have been gold for happiness or excitement, pink for flirtingâ€|" at this Stormfly blushed pinkish red, "â€| or embarrassment," everyone laughed at this, making Stormfly blush even more, "red is irritation, white is fear or surprise, as you saw, and what I would say is the most useful is that when she's lying," Cami gave Stormfly a hard glare, "she turns deep purple." "Yes, fine, make fun of me," Stormfly snapped. "I came here to have fun, so could we-"

Suddenly a horn sounded behind us. "Well, it looks like you're going to get your wish," Cami commented, walking over to Stormfly and hoisting herself up. Astrid followed next, then the rest of the group, and Hiccup and I shared a glance. "Should we get some front row seats?" I asked. He nodded and smiled, mounting Toothless as I changed and waited for my sister to follow his lead. When she was slow to comply, I looked at her and asked, "You coming or not?" She shook her head in realization and ran over and climbed on. I smiled. "Good idea, because it won't be much of a view form down here." Holly just gave me a dirty look. "Mom wouldn't be very happy if you left me alone, either," she snapped back. I laughed and replied, "Then stop looking and acting like a two year old and hold on tight!"

We lifted up into the air and watched as the contestants lined up. "So exactly where does the race go?" I asked. "I mean, what's the path it's supposed to follow?" Hiccup pointed down at the starting line. "Well it starts there, then loops out down past the path to the docks and over the harbor, then back up the main road of the village and across the forest there, and we decided it would go through the edge of the rock maze Toothless and I like. Then, it comes up between the two outer catapults and end in the village square," he pointed to the white banner above the square. I nodded, then began flying over to about the middle of where the race would be. "I'll stay here so that Holly doesn't fall off, since she doesn't exactly have a saddle to keep her attached to me," I commented. Hiccup nodded, and he had Toothless join me.

A few minutes later, everyone was ready, and a Viking named Mulch stood up on top of a platform nearby and held up a large horn, and sounded off, starting the race.

And they were off! Surprisingly, the first one out was actually Fishlegs and Horrorcow (his Gronkle), but it wasn't exactly long before some of the others were passing him and some of the other slower riders. At the front of the race, I could see Astrid, Snotlout, and Camicazi edging in and out of a three-way battle for first place, with the twins right behind on their Zippleback. Everyone else began to group together in a big column behind as they raced down the dock path. As I watched and Holly cheered Astrid on, they continued over the harbor and it became clear where the real battle was. Nightmares are fast, but so are Nadders and, due to their streamlined shape, Mood dragons, so Snotlout slowly began to fall behind, joining up with the twins. Cami and Astrid continued to edge past each other, trying to get just a little further ahead of the other as the race began to pass over the forest and head for the maze.

As everyone entered the sea stacks that formed the maze, I saw Astrid get ahead of Cami and Cami was forced over, taking a slightly longer route. However, Astrid happened to hit a temporary dead end, so they both came out the other side of the maze at the same time. They turned down the last stretch, and Stormfly edged forward. Astrid saw this, and urged Thorn onward. It was Nadder, then Mood dragon, Nadder, Mood, Astrid, Cami, Astrid Camiâ€|.

The final quarter mile stretched ahead, and Cami eased in front. Astrid spotted her, and leaned down against Thorn, making them more streamlined, and they rocketed forward, right under Camicazi's nose. It wasn't until Astrid and Thorn were completely ahead of them before Cami copied Astrid, but by then it was too late for her. Astrid and Thorn were only a hundred feet from the end, and the banner that marked it.

WHOOOOOSH!

Thorn blasted the banner, lighting it up as they passed it first, signaling their win. Cami was right behind her, followed a few seconds later by the first of the rest of the group. "Yay Astrid!" Holly screamed, making me wince from the high pitch. I couldn't blame her, though. That's just the kind of thing she does when she's excited, so I joined her in the cheering. I looked over to see Hiccup cheering as well, and down below the crowd was boisterous as could be again, which was frighteningly exuberant.

Astrid and Cami circled around and landed in the village square next to Stoick, and Astrid jumped off of Thorn. Toothless and I landed, and both Holly and Hiccup jumped off and ran up to Astrid, though Holly got there first. "Astrid!" she cried, giving her a hug. "You won!" "Yeah, I guess I did," Astrid said, laughing. "Thank you. Maybe you can race with me next time." I shot Astrid a look of 'don't encourage her,' but she ignored it. I called Holly back over to me, and Hiccup walked up to Astrid, where they embraced. "Congratulations," Hiccup said. "I see my lessons paid off." Astrid smiled and nodded. "Along with a few secrets of my own," she said mischievously. Then, they shared a long, hard kiss. You know, sometimes having superhuman hearing is a very bad thing.

After they were done, and all of the other riders had landed, Stoick spoke. "We will now present the winner with her trophy!" Hiccup came and stood next to me, now back to my human form, with Holly next to me and Toothless behind us. Astrid stepped up on the platform next to Stoick, who moved back to reveal a small procession of Vikings, spearheaded by a young woman I didn't recognize. She placed a beautiful wreath of flowers and silky leaves on Astrid's head, and then stepped back. The flowers seemed to really fit Astrid's look, though don't tell her I said that, because she likes looking tough rather than pretty.

Next, a small group of Vikings stepped forward, holding a small wooden box, and held it out to Astrid. She took it, and very slowly opened it. When she looked inside, she gasped and smiled wide. "What is it?" I asked, curious. She reached in and slowly pulled out a shining, blue silk neckband, and dangling from the bottom was a perfect replica, in gold and ornate gems, of a Night Fury in a dive. There was a collective "OOOOOOHHHHH!" from the crowd, even the men, as they were all partial to valuable objects (though I'm sure they weren't dumb enough to try and take it from Astrid, lest they lose their head), and I had to admit, it was beautiful. Hiccup leaned over to me and whispered, "I thought she'd win, so I made it myself." I looked at him in surprise, and was about to ask how he made such a thing, when Stoick bellowed. "Congratulations Astrid, on winning the Dragon Race!" a collective cheer went up and I was forced to lose my dragon hearing level in exchange for my original, but even then I was sure I'd lose my hearing for a while. Astrid was given many high fives and back slaps, and then was hoisted up and paraded down the street toward the next challenge.

Over the next couple hours, Holly and I watched as the teens took part in the rest of the challenges, including a dragon obstacle course (Hiccup was competing there, and he won that), a best trick contest (also won by Hiccup, using his and Toothless' flying prowess to their advantage), a target shooting contest (won by Camicazi, believe it or not; Hiccup and Toothless were out of that one too), and another contest which I cannot recall at this point, won by Snotlout. When the challenges were over, all of the winners were hoisted up like Astrid was before, and paraded toward the Mead Hall. I thought that it was just for winners of that day's contests, but I was wrong.

Suddenly, I found myself up in the air too, and I spun around real quick. "Holly!" I yelled, looking for my sister. "It's alright, I've got her!" I heard Stormfly yell over the noise of the crowd. I turned again to see Holly sitting on Stormfly's back, laughing at my predicament. I sent her a look that said, 'You'll pay for that laughing later,' but she ignored me, and Stormfly lifted off and flew toward the hall. I looked back down the parade to see even Toothless being carried along too, which was also a comical sight.

Once we reached the Mead Hall, we were carried inside and placed on the stone fire ring. After the rest of the Vikings had crowded in, Stoick stepped up next to all of us. "Now for the final celebration," he boomed. "In honor of this festival's winners, and our Vikings of honor, let's give them a grand cheer!"

"Oh, no," I muttered, and practically shut down my hearing. Good thing too, because a split second later I could hear the air

vibrating from the Vikings yelling at the top of their lungs, the hall practically shaking. I turned to see Toothless cringing, with his own ears pressed flat against his head. ::I hate these cheers,:: he complained ::Don't they ever do anything quietly?:: I laughed, though more out of understanding than amusement. ::Just tough it out. See? They're quieting down already.:: As it were, the cheer was in fact dying off as the Vikings grabbed mugs of mead for a number of toasts. Toothless just snorted and shook his head. ::Jeez, that hurt. I'll never get used to that as long as I live.:: ::Too bad,:: I said in mock pity. ::You'll have to put up with it for just as long.:: He shot me a murderous look, but I just smirked and shrugged it off, turning my attention back to the crowd.

The rest of the day was filed with toasts of Mead in celebration, which I of course opted out of, never having been a fan of any alcohol, along with Holly, Hiccup and Astrid, and later in the evening, here was much simple fun and telling of stories and legends. Everyone enjoyed the stories I had learned back home, as of course they had never heard of them before. Eventually, though, and Holly and I said our goodbyes and flew back to the portal. "That was fun!" Holly exclaimed as we walked into our house. "I'm glad you let me come along." "See? Told you," my mom commented from somewhere in back of the house. I just smirked and took it, saying goodnight to everyone before going to bed. I still had to return the next day, as that was when all of the other tribes would be leaving, so I needed a good rest even though the festivities were done.

As promised, I returned the next morning, though a little bit later, admittedly, than I had expected. Astrid was quick to point this out.

"You're late," she stated obviously as I landed and walked up to my circle of friends in the village square. "Yeah, I know," I retorted. "Sorry for not having everlasting energy and a free pass from home. Yesterday wiped me out." "Uh huh. Well, at least you're here to say goodbye. Cami, when does your boat leave?" We all turned to Cami, who quickly replied, "About one hour." "You do have everything, right?" Hiccup asked. She checked herself over. "Well, let's see. All of my clothes and big belongings are already on the ship. I have my daggers, hatchet, short sword, long sword, bolasâ€|" she kept rattling different hidden weapons off the top of her head. I swear, she's like a walking armory herself! "â€| that about covers it," she finished. As I listened, though, I realized she'd left something out. "What about the \*\*other\*\* sword?" I asked. Camicazi put on a guilty look. "Oh, um, that sword? About thatâ€|" she stuttered, before reaching behind her and pulling it out, grinning. "It's right here." That's when I noticed the third scabbard across her back. I shook her head as she grinned, holding up the sword where it gleamed from the recent polishing it had been given. I looked at the other two teens and the dragon in our special group. "Ready?" I asked, pulling my own sword out as the others did the same. "Ready!" they said in unison. The four of us raised our carved swords up and touched the tips together. "To friends forever!" we yelled, and Toothless shot off a bolt of fire. We all grinned and slid our swords back in place, and turned to Cami to say our final goodbyes before she went down to her ship in the harbor. To my surprise, she ran up and hugged me. Or, at least, she tried to squeeze the life out of me. "Bye Hawken, I expect to see you soon!" she said. In response, I gasped, "You'reâ€| a little.. tightâ€| urgh!"

She released me, and to my relief I wasn't alone. Cami ran up to Hiccup next, squeezing him even closer to passing out, and even making him squeal from it (not a manly noise, that's for sure). That got a giggle from everyone. Last of all, she walked up to Astrid, and put her hands on her hips. "Normally I wouldn't care and I'd hug you anyway," she said, "but I don't want to end my visit with a fight." "Since when?" Hiccup asked, smirking. Astrid laughed and shook her head in amusement. "Alright, I'll allow it just this once," she replied, to Hiccup's and my own amazement. The two girls grabbed each other and shared an embrace like the sisters they almost were.

"Well," Camicazi began, "I guess this is goodbye for a while! I promise I'll make it back at least once before the freeze sets in this winter!" With that, she turned and headed down to her ship.

The process was repeated with Thuggory, though thankfully this time around hugs were replaced by the manlier handshake and back slap. Then, he too headed off to his ship with his father, who along with Bertha was saying goodbye to Stoick. Lastly, everyone in the village stood on the docks and the cliffs around the harbor, while the teens and I flew to the sea stacks around the harbor to say final farewells. "GOODBYE EVERYONE! SEE YOU SOON!"

Not long after, the ships were all out of hearing range, and soon out of sight as well, and we turned to face each other. "Well," I said, jerking everyone out of their thoughts about the past few days, "what say we head over to the cove for a while before I leave?" The answer was a unanimous "Yes!" Big surprise, as this was the last day any of us teens would have off before they had to return to doing their chores, and I would be busy myself and unable to visit for a little while. The rest of the teens mounted on their dragons, as I morphed to match Toothless, and we headed off to the cove.

There's something very relaxing about just sitting around in the rare Berk sunshine, swapping stories and jokes (even if I was stuck with the job of Dragonese translator), and having fun in the lake. The middle of the day, actually, was punctuated with Toothless and I dropping everyone in the middle of the pool. Hiccup got off scot free, of course, since he couldn't really swim with his prosthetic and would have sunk, but the rest of the teens got dunked. But of course, dragon wings are plenty large enough to soak him head to toe with, so everyone got wet.

Every good thing has to come to an end, though, and around six o' clock in the evening we were interrupted in our horsing around.

"HAWKEN!" We all jumped and looked up. At the top of the cove ridge, near the portal, was none other than my sister, Holly, again. "Man, how the heck does she get to be so loud?" Tuffnut complained. I shrugged and looked back up at my younger sibling. "What do you want Holly?" "It's not what I want," she replied. "Mom wants you to come back home, it's getting late and she said she wanted to talk about something." I sighed, thinking I knew what was coming. "Alright, I'll be there in a few minutes," I said, and turned to face the gang. "I'm guessing I'll be busy for the next few days, but I'll see if I can't arrange a time for all of you to come over. What do you say?" I asked. Everyone got excited as no one except for Hiccup and Toothless had ever actually been to my house, though on one short occasion

during the festival when I had to grab something, Astrid had almost come along. I nodded. "Well then, I guess that settles it. I'll catch you guys later!" "BYE!" they all yelled, and I turned and flew up through the portal.

Luckily, the "discussion" wasn't what I'd expected, as it was only about a few details for my family's next campout, and even better, I was able to convince my mom to let everyone come over about a week and a half from then, on a weekend. So I went to sleep in a good mood, but I still had a nagging feeling I was missing something. When I woke up the next morning, it dawned on me, excuse the pun. I only had about a half of a month or so before I would have to get back into real life: school was coming soon.

### 23. Chapter 23: Back to Real Life

\*\*A/N-Back again for a little while! I've received a few reviews recently that I'd like to address, probably new readers. First off, do remember if you post as a guest or anonymously, I can't reply directly back to you, and I enjoy doing so! And I cannot guarantee the review will be posted as multiple or redundant ones tend to be deleted. Also, Book 1 was written in my earlier days of writing (a good 3 years ago), and so naturally it's going to be lighter, happier, and a lot more playing around than the rest. It's an introduction book, even if it's so far the longest, so there's a lot of get-to-know and explore the world type things.\*\*

\*\*So yes, this book is happy and not a lot of pulling on the heartstrings type activity, and for those who like that, I enjoy writing happier things a lot. But, Book 1 does have at least one major battle, and in the rest of the series you can well expect more battles, arguments, tense situations, and painful scenes, though I have yet to decide if I have the heart to actually kill anyone off in the final couple books.\*\*

\*\*Beyond that though, the story continues and we have much to come, so please read, and review, I like your thoughts!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 23</p>

Back to Real Life

The days came and went extremely quickly. My sleepover "party" for all of the Viking teens came, and it went just as I expected: lots and lots of questions about this, that, and the other, Hiccup and I using the snakes to scare everyone out of their pants (unfortunately for Snotlout, it was actually literally), lots of roughhousing and almost an accident with the display cases in the living room, and plenty of other good-natured fun in the back yard, especially at night when the dragons were able to come over. As always, there was the inevitable breakup of a "twin-fight" by me, but thanks to the invention of water hoses, it ended more entertaining than badly.

In all reality, it went quite well compared to how such an unorthodox sleepover could have ended, and, naturally, I made sure to give everyone a few good laughs by popping in the movie: How to Train Your Dragon. I bet you didn't know that Snotlout actually has a very weak

stomach; he nearly threw up at the bonding scene (we made sure to tell Fireworm to try out that little stunt on him).

As the days passed, I continued my lessons to Hiccup, Astrid, and occasionally a few of the other teens (mostly Fishlegs) and even Stoick, on how to read and write in the English alphabet (though I am still completely hung up as to why in the world they are able to speak English, as any sane person would expect Vikings to speak Norse). There was also another visit from Camicazi, as promised, where we were able to pull off some worthy pranks on the three biggest jesters in the village: the twins and Snotlout. There was also the inevitable sword sparring between me and Cami. I don't know why, but she's continued to become more and more determined to win at least one fight fairly against me, though my, uh, abilities make that the slightest bit impossible. This was also the point where Cami made her first trip to my house, and Hiccup and I made sure it was memorable.

As time continued on, not caring about how much fun we were having, there was one nagging pest that kept on popping up, a reminder that glorious summer was slowly drawing to a close, and my "real" life would begin again soon. It began with the signs and ads at stores, then registration and shopping for supplies, the newspaper comics showing the characters getting ready for the start of it, and finally, it came: the last empty day before the dreaded school year began.

I headed out with great sadness into and through the portal. Luckily, Hiccup and Toothless were down in the cove, so I didn't have to go far. I jumped down into the oversized pit, spreading my usual pair of wings to slow my descent, and unsurprisingly Toothless noticed me first. ::Hawken! It's been a bit of a while since your last visit. What's been keeping you?:: Surprising how attached to me he's become since our first eventful encounter with each other. "Sadly, that's exactly what I'm here to talk about," I said, landing next to Hiccup and startling him a bit. "What?" he asked, not being able to understand Toothless' side of the conversation. "Toothless asked me what I've been up to recently, and that's what I'm here about," I explained. Hiccup suddenly got wide eyed and nervous. "Wait- you're not leaving are you?" he wondered. I gave a sad laugh. "No, nothing like that, but my visits will likely be far less frequent for the next nine months or so. I'm afraid my life has caught up to me again." "What do you mean by that?" Hiccup asked. I shook my head. "School has started for me again, or at least it will tomorrow, so for most of the time, I will be getting educated five days a week, with only a couple breaks here and there. Therefore, my nearly daily visits will probably be cut down to weekly at best, possibly even longer if my weekends are busy." I smiled and sat down on a nearby rock. "I promise I will try to visit regularly, but we'll be seeing quite a bit less of each other for a while," I continued.

What surprised me was who looked the most disheartened. Hiccup was depressed by the news, but I could see his look of understanding on his face. He, at least, knew how important learning really is to keep up with the world. Toothless, on the other handâ€¦..

::Can we just visit you every day?:: he pleaded. I laughed and shook my head while rubbing his. "First of all, you need to stay and watch Hiccup, as we all know the trouble he can get into alone." "Hey!" "Second, school gives me a lot of work that keeps me very busy in the

evenings too. I won't be available at all." ::Aww, come on. Hiccup's usually busy in the forge, so I won't have anyone to hang out with.:: I sighed and gave him a deadpan glare. "There are always the other dragons in the village, I'm sure you can find something to do with them. And think about others for a change, Toothless. We have very busy lives that are extremely important to keep up with. Hiccup helps keep the village going by repairing tools, weapons, \_saddles,\_ so on, so forth. I need to keep learning to survive in my world, and to keep anyone from discovering this tantalizing secret we're hiding for a good long time, alright?" Toothless hung his head, looking defeated. ::Alright, but I still don't like it.:: I laughed. "None of us do, bud."

We spent the rest of the day relaxing around the cove, playing around with each other and the other teens who showed up later, and having races in order to make the most of my last free day for a good long while. We eventually went to the village and kept the roughhousing going, though a little while before I had to leave, things took an emotional turn. The teens had decided it was time to tell me how they really felt about me, and it nearly made me stay for the night. Astrid, as it turns out, saw me almost like a brother, or at least family, and even more surprisingly, Tuffnut and Snotlout had been secretly making a sort of present for me, you know, as part of the gang and occasional partner in pranks, or so they said. I never thought of them as detailed artists, but when someone is a really good friend, I guess it pays to try and make the gift as accurate as possible. They had crafted a wooden plaque for me, and though it consisted of all of us standing together, admittedly with me in the middle and standing out more, it was kind of a gift for the whole gang. Anyway, the day rolled to an end with some more roughhousing, pranks, and joking around, and generally having a good time. I even had the chance to say farewell to the draconic friends I had made before everything began to settle down. Finally, as the sun began to dip below the horizon, it came time for me to head home, as staying out late was really not an option anymore for the rest of the year.

"Well, I guess this is goodbye for a few weeks, at least," I said after the gang had quieted down. "I promise I'll keep things interesting around here, though, and I'll let you guys know what's going on when I do visit, okay?" They all nodded, and Astrid stepped forward, pointing her axe at me. "I'm holding you to that promise, you hear me?" she warned. "As much as I love him, Hiccup just doesn't make a good sparring partner yet." That got a chuckle out of everyone except said twig. "Hey! I can fight, you're just too good for anyone around here!" I snorted. "Sure, Hiccup. I've seen your skills before." Another round of giggling. "Well, I'll see you guys around! Bye for now!" I turned and spread my wings, and shot up to the portal entrance, followed by a loud unanimous "GOODBYE!" from everyone and a bunch of waving hands. I waved back, then walked back into my world, only barely ready to return to my original life, a life of learning and, compared to what I had experienced over the summer, boredom. Luckily, though, I was dead certain that I wouldn't long be having any more annoying kid problems from now on.

\* \* \*

><p>BEEP!BEEP!BEEP!BEEP!BEEP!</p>

"Urgh." I groaned as I reached up to turn my alarm off. "Come on,

can't I have just ten more minutes ofâ€¦.. waitâ€|" Then I remembered what that day was, what the alarm meant. "Oh, goody goody. Back to the penitentiary, I forgot." In case you didn't pick up on it, I have never liked school, never will, but it is definitely an unavoidable and ugly truth in life, and sadly, I understand its importance. That's why I at least managed to drag myself out of bed and get dressed, then began my usual school morning routine: eat breakfast, get my school supplies packed up and ready, deal with a couple plant problems, yell at Holly to get her butt moving so we wouldn't be late, and finally, get in the car to drive to school. For the most part, the trip to school was uneventful, but luckily there were some good songs on the radio. "Hey Hawken?" I heard from the passenger seat. I glanced over at Holly, waiting for her to continue. That was an annoying habit she'd picked up from my dad, starting but never finishing her sentences. "Yeah?" "Are you sure you're not going to have problems at school with your new powers, are you?" I sighed and gave her a deadpan look. "Why does everyone have to ask me that?" I snapped. "First mom when I got home last night, then dad when he got home, and now you? You don't remember my plan, do you?" I turned back to face the road, getting even more irritated by the driver in front of me who couldn't even get to 10 miles under the speed limit. "I want to keep all of this turn-into-a-dragon-and-hero-of-a-whole-world thing under wraps for as long as I possibly can, thank you." "Alright, I just don't want you to get in trouble. That's embarrassing for a little sister." I just gave her a stink-eye as we pulled into the parking lot at the school.

I stepped out, and headed in after saying goodbye to Holly and locking up the car. Surprisingly, even after all I had gone through over the summer, school seemed like the most daunting and overwhelming thing yet. Maybe it was because I was now a senior, I don't know. I was now used to burly Vikings with bad manners swarming around me, not the five-to-eighteen year old kids and teens texting on their cell phones and not watching where they were going. And of course, everyone noticed me. For some reason, I stick out like a sore thumb wherever I go, probably because of my outlandish hair and habit of carrying a bag full of plant files, but still, I look normal past that. In any case, I was glad my hair was long enough to hide the spiral of scale on my forehead. They were nearly the same color as my skin, but that would still be something people would notice.

As I headed for my first class, I was bombarded with a bunch of "Hi Hawken" and "Where's your glasses?" and so on. Rather annoying it is after being somewhere nearly every day where everyone knows and respects you and gives you the space you need because of it. Luckily, my first class was right inside the school entrance, so I made it there in one piece, only to get bombarded with even more hellos from everyone in the room. At least there was one really good friend there I could talk with without going nuts: my friend Leighton.

The first class I had was rather boring, but as the advising period passed I started getting fidgety. Even staying in the library during an open block I felt uneasy, uncomfortable. I had never been so glad for lunch time, and I quickly heated up my food, then went outside where my friends and I had decided to hang out. Sure enough, about 2 minutes later Leighton appeared, walking over and sitting down under the tree near me. "Hey Leighton," I said. "Hey," she replied. She looked at me. "Something wrong?" I shrugged. "I just don't feel right at school today. Too much happened over summer." "Oh? Anything really interesting?" I smiled. "You don't even know the half of it." She

shrugged and took a bite out of her sandwich. "So tell me about it," she said. My smile froze, and I shifted uncomfortably. "Eh, maybe another time. It's not something I really want to share with the world right now." Leighton nodded. "It's alright, I understand. There are a lot of things I never like to talk about either, but you know it helps to tell someone."

We sat in silence for a few minutes before some other friends showed up and gathered around the tree. I turned to Leighton, who was looking through her backpack. "I got a new snake over summer," I said, out of the blue. She looked up. "Oh yeah, I saw that on Facebook. Mine is still the same old, same old." I nodded, then looked around and sighed. "Hey, about what you said earlier, maybe it would be better if I told-"

"Well, if it isn't the plant nerd," a voice said behind me. My mood dropped really quickly at that point, and I growled a bit before turning around. "This your girlfriend?" the owner of the voice teased. I stood up. "Look, it's the first day of school, Gareth; can't I even have one moment of peace before I have to deal with you again?" Gareth laughed and gave his backpack to one of his motley crew of friends. "What's the matter, don't like me being around?" he asked innocently. "No, I don't," I snapped back. "I get it, you're new here, this'll be your first full year at this school, and you want someone to pick on. I ain't gonna be that guy." I turned around to pick up my stuff, but a hand on my shoulder stopped me. "Something I say make you mad?" Gareth continued. "What are you going to do to keep me from annoying you, run to a teacher and whine?" I smiled. "Not at all. If need be I could deal with you without even raising a finger." I reached up to pull his hand off and turned back to my stuff, picking it up and nodding to Leighton, letting her know I was moving elsewhere.

"Hey, I wasn't done with you yet!" Gareth shouted. He reached out and grabbed me by the shoulder again. "Gareth, leave him alone already," Leighton said. I turned around and grabbed his hand again, but this time I didn't let go. Gareth had pushed me just a little too far. "Don't. Touch. Me," I hissed, and threw his hand back hard enough to make him stumble. That really did it. Gareth grabbed me by both of my shoulders, and Leighton came up to help move him away, but a look from me kept her back. I reached up, grabbing both his hands at the wrists, tightly enough to make him let go. Then, I activated a new ability, one that's not visible on the outside, but it sure can be felt.

"AAAAAHHH!"

Gareth screamed and yanked his hands back as mine began to burn like a Fireworm's skin. He looked at his wrists and the new red handprints that went all the way around them. He glared at me. "What did you just do to me you little twerp?!" he screeched. But I held up a hand. "Let's say it's a different version of the Indian burn," I said, smirking, but still plenty angry. "Tell you what. Meet me after school on the platform by the swamp. No teachers to get you in trouble, just you and me. Then I can show you exactly why you will not bother me again." Gareth snorted, not believing a word I said. "Fine," he spat. "I expect to see you there." He turned around and stomped off, but some of his friends got wide eyed and pointed at me before they followed him. I turned to Leighton, who also got really wide eyed. "Hawken," she began, "first of all, what did you do to

him, and second, why are your eyes bright red?"

That sentence hit me like a brick. I raced into the school and to the bathroom, followed by Leighton, and looked into the mirror. Sure enough, my eyes were the same ember red as a Shadow Dragon's. I blinked and focused, changing my eyes back to the normal color, then made a fake stab at happiness. Just as I suspected, my eyes changed to a bright green, like Toothless' eyes. I changed them back, and walked out to where Leighton was standing. "What was it?" she asked. I sighed, and motioned for her to follow me. We went around to the back of the school, down to the platform I mentioned earlier.

"I have to tell someone, and since you've already caught onto one of the clues, it might as well be you," I said. Leighton raised and eyebrow, but didn't say anything. I looked around to make sure that no one could hear us. "You know how there's that one movie I really like?" Leighton rolled her eyes and smirked. "How to Train Your Dragon. How could anyone ever forget?" I nodded. "Well, you also know about the little short fun story I was writing about it?" Leighton nodded. "Well," I began, "let's just say a version of that actually happened."

The silence was deafening, until Leighton started to chuckle. "Do you really expect me to believe that? I mean, there's no way it could be possâ€|. " She trailed off as I shifted my eyes to match Toothless', not just in color but shape. I continued by holding up my hands and making rows of black scales form across them. Then I reverted back to my old self. "Yeah, it happened. That's why I wasn't really wanting to talk about what happened this summer," I said. "I found the portal, and it leads right to the cove." The silence continued for another few minutes, and I started to cringe at the thought of Leighton's reaction.

Finally, she blew out a breath. "I'll keep your secret, if you want me to," she said, "but you'll have to tell me what happened." I smiled, and let out the breath I was holding in relief. "Well, there's a few more minutes before the next class starts, so: I was working in my garden when I found the portal, and so I went through andâ€| . "

It took until class was about to start before I had laid out a bare skeleton of what happened. Leighton found most of it entertaining, but she admitted it was a lot to take in, had it not been for the fact that I had grown scales before her eyes. When it was time to head back to class, she told me that she would have to be there when Gareth got what was coming to him. "There is no way I'm going to miss the look on his face when you do whatever you're going to." I nodded, then we headed back to class, me feeling a bit more relieved now that there was someone at school I could talk to about what happened.

I only had one more class that day, then an open block I used to think about what exactly I would do with Gareth. I decided there was no way I would show him any more of my dragon side than my eyes, so I would rely on heightened senses instead. Finally, the torture-that-is-school ended, and I headed to the science room where I spent time after school to put my things down, before going out the back door of the room and down to the platform. Only a couple minutes later, Leighton showed up, then Gareth and his motley crew. From the science room above, someone else also emerged, who I had completely forgotten about: my other friend, Cameron. I held up a hand to tell

him not to come down, as Gareth stepped up onto the platform.

"So, ready to be humiliated?" I asked sweetly. Gareth snorted. "The only one who's going to be humiliated here is you, for giving me these burns, however you did that." He held up his hands to prove his point. Then he stepped up to me, wound up and swung for a punch. Six inches from my head, I grabbed his fist, bringing it to a halt and even forcing him back a bit. Gareth went slightly wide eyed, but wasn't deterred, and brought his other hand in for an uppercut against my chin, but of course, it never made it above my chest and, now that I had both of his hands, I twisted him down and gently dropped him to the boards below. I heard Leighton laughing from next to the willow tree nearby. "How theâ€¢ oh, never mind," Gareth hissed as he got up and came at me with a simultaneous fist and backhanded swing. I bent back to avoid them, touching the platform behind me with my hands, and did a hand standing flip at just the right moment to kick Gareth's wrists out of the way. Now with more space between us, Gareth ran at me with both fists aimed at my head. I smirked, and sidestepped just before he would have made contact, and barely put my toe out in front of him.

"AAAH!" THUNK!

Gareth tripped over the side of the platform and landed in the cattails of the swamp. Now, it wasn't just a chuckle coming from by the willow, it was gasping laughter from Leighton, and I heard Cameron chuckling from up on the hill. I stepped off the platform as Gareth rolled onto his back and placed a foot on his chest. "Had enough of this, or do you want to go another round?" I asked innocently. "I could go all afternoon, that was just too easy." Gareth grabbed my foot and tried to flip me over onto the ground, but found that he couldn't budge my foot even an inch. He glared at me, but the glare melted and he scrambled up and back from me as I lifted my foot off. I half expected him to try and come at me again, and I was prepared to give him a literal pain in the butt just to end this useless show of strength, but instead he turned and ran across the field in the other direction, grabbing his backpack and bolting for the neighborhood nearby. I glanced over at his friends (as always their names escape me) and they soon followed suit. I shook my head, then walked over to Leighton. She, of course, was cracking up. "I-I don't thinkâ€¢ he'll be a problem from now on," she gasped. She bent down and picked up her belongings. Then she looked at me. "By the way, your eyes are bright orange now." I blinked and changed them back to normal, then looked up the hill at Cameron, who was waiting for an explanation. I sighed and we both went up to the science room so I could figure out a story for what happened.

Leighton was definitely right. Gareth and his gang kept a pretty good distance from me, and it seems that rumors of the "fight," if you could call it that, spread quickly as everyone showed me just a little more respect in the days afterward. At the very least, those who taunted me did so with a bit of a cringe whenever I glared at them. Then again, it may have just been my eyes doing that. As it turned out, somehow the different eye colors and shapes that came with different dragon species had somehow connected to my eyes' natural ability to change color according to my mood. Therefore, when I was excited or happy my eyes changed Night Fury green. If I was extremely relaxed (which wasn't that often anymore, sadly), they changed to sea dragon blue. Anger went with the red eyes of the Shadow, fear was bright yellow, and adrenaline was orange.

Depression, as I sadly found out, was the black color of a few dragons whose names escape me. Thankfully, though, my eyes stuck to only changing color, rarely ever changing shape unless the emotion was really strong. I never lost control over the rest of my abilities, thankfully, though a few times I was very tempted to give a few brats a new fiery hairdo. Don't worry, no one is walking around with black heads yet.

Leighton eventually convinced me to let her meet the gang as well, and came over once or twice. I was right about the shock, though, as she barely talked for the first hour we were in Berk, but eventually she warmed up to the idea a bit more. Also, I have to mention Cameron: we managed to convince him there was nothing out of the ordinary, at least for now, but he stayed suspicious.

Days began passing faster again after that, and my visits with Hiccup and the gang became more and more frequent again as I found out I learned and did my homework best when I was teaching the gang something new (though very rarely did they all sit through it; the twins and Snotlout are still adamant about not learning). Time flies quickly when you're having fun (and when you're a senior in high school, it flies by no matter if you're having fun or not), and soon the warm days of summer also began to come to an end, and as fall began, a chill formed in the air both at home and in Berk, and as days grew shorter, the onset of winter loomed near as well.

#### 24. Chapter 24: Winter Antics

\*\*A/N-Another fun-and-games chapter, but everyone likes snowball fights! For those of you really aching for a change of pace, that's about to begin. There will be plenty of fun chapters to come, but the introductory phase of the series is basically done. Now, the real storylines begin.\*\*

\*\*As always, read and review! I'd hate to have to put a "review limit" on my postings, but with 24 chapters and not quite as many reviews, it's a little disheartening...\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 24</p>

Winter Antics

"Heads up dragon boy!" PAFFF! "Hey! That was my nose! You're asking for it Lout!" "Like you could hit the broadside of a barn with that thing."

When Hiccup said in the movie that Berk was only "a few degrees south of Freezing to Death," he wasn't just talking about a rather aptly named village. For the Viking village, the real onset of winter began to take hold around mid October, even while my home was bathed in 60 and 70 degree weather, and so I often ended up with the gang over at my house on my free days whenever it was possible. Despite their claims that they could take anything, even Vikings still enjoy warm weather. Of course, the dragons didn't mind it as much in Berk, what with them naturally having body temperatures that work like personal ovens. That is, unless you're talking about a water dragon, then they just drop their body temperatures to near freezing and deal with the

cold that way.

However, when snow comes, you try to deal with, or in some cases, enjoy it when you can. That's what we were doing when the snow finally began accumulating around my house, finding different ways to pass the cold winter months without going nuts. Nearly every time I went to Berk, and nearly every time they came to my yard (if there was snow at my house), you could count on a major snowball fight. This time, too, I had a couple of friends along with me.

I already mentioned how Leighton had found out about my secret, but I doubt it would come as a surprise that the other kid I hang around with, Cameron, would unearth my little mystery as well. It took him about a month and a half, but eventually I had to tell him, and soon enough both him and Leighton were visiting my house on a regular, if uncommon, basis to have a little fun. Today, it was a snowball fight in one of Berk's small fields.

I wound up with the snowball in my hand, intent on showing Snotlout just how well I can throw when I want to, and let loose, nailing him in the chest with a snowball big enough to make anyone smaller go flying. Snotlout, however, was not as affected, but still got knocked on his butt. "Ooooff! Alright, I take it back," he wheezed. "You win that one." I smirked and turned, only to jump to the side to avoid a snowball coming from Astrid. She was dangerous enough with an axe or sword, but if she has a snowball in her hands, she rarely misses. Luckily, I was not her target, and turned in time to see Ruffnut get whitewashed. "Yeah! Direct hit!" Astrid yelled, scooping up another ball of snow, and threw it at Tuffnut, taking him down for the count as well.

Suddenly, the air was filled with falling snow, and I looked up to see Toothless and Hiccup flying by, Toothless flinging snow everywhere with his tail, and Hiccup using the cover to nail everyone with his own stash of ammunition. Then they landed, and Hiccup got off, scooping up snow and pelting everyone he could. Years of always being picked on had made him fast and accurate, better even at snowball fights than Astrid. His specialty: hit his target in the hand, unarming them, then pelt them with as many snowballs as he could before they got out of the way.

I smiled, as Hiccup wasn't paying attention to me, and used my wings to scoop up a huge batch of snow, then spun and released it, completely burying him. I turned to see Toothless get the same idea, only he went after my visiting friends, who only barely got out of the way. I laughed and picked up another snowball, pelting Toothless on the back of the head for good measure. ::Hey! I thought they were open targets as well!:: he complained. ::They are,:: I replied, ::but that doesn't mean going after them keeps you out of the fight either.:: I started to say something else, but a snowball hit me in the side of my head.

I turned to see my sister grinning at me, having also come along to join the fun. Nobody wanted to hit her, thinking they would get me mad, so she had almost perfect shots at everyone. I shook my head. "You asked for it Holly!" I yelled, scooping up snow with my tail and flinging it at her, turning her completely white. "Ahh! That's cold!" she yelled, as some of the snow went down her shirt. I started laughing again, but was cut off when suddenly I heard growling all around the field.

Everyone stopped what they were doing and looked around, seeing dragons come out of the trees all around us. We all started backing toward the center of the field as they advanced. Once we were in one big group, I noticed Toothless smile, followed by Fireworm, then Thorn, and the rest of the dragons as they bent down toward the snow. "Oh, no," was all I could say before the dragon-initiated blizzard hit, burying all of us under the snow.

We popped our heads up, then started cracking up, and couldn't stop. This was how it was most of the days we got together, but it never got old.

Snowball fights weren't the only things we had fun with. Vikings already had an idea of how to make snowmen, and what with 5 feet of snow or so usually covering Berk, there was plenty to work with. Add in a couple of enthusiastic dragons, and those things could get huge! However, one of our first attempts didn't go too well, as it started without Toothless being around, a rare sight in and of itself, seeing as how Hiccup was helping us and the dragon almost never leaves his side. I can only imagine what was keeping him busy.

But anyway, we were nearly done and Hiccup was climbing up the side of the giant snow sculpture, working on putting in the arms, when Toothless showed up. Naturally, he thought that Hiccup was in trouble, and being attacked by some sort of monster, so our snowman ended up with a steaming hole through his middle, and Toothless looking ashamed when he discovered what we were actually trying to do. We just laughed it off and had him help us build the next one, no big deal. Sad day for the first snowman, but we found out melting them was almost more fun.

Then, came winter break, a wonderful two and a half weeks where I could do whatever I wanted. Plenty of time for me to visit Berk, and also plenty of chances for everyone to visit me as well. It also gave me another chance to show Hiccup a little more of my world. Everyone knows I am not a fan of Christmas, or really anything that it entails, but I still sometimes admire some of the light shows that are put on, and naturally Hiccup was completely enthralled by such electrical art. So after many times of him asking "Are there more? Can we go look?" my mom and I relented and decided that it wouldn't hurt to show him more. We drove him around for a little while (after some tedious explanations about how a car works), and Hiccup was blown away at even the littlest displays. Then again, he did come from a world where the only known electrical power was in the form of lightning bolts, so it wasn't too surprising that he was enamored with all of it. It did give me and my mom a few laughs, though.

The last thing I expected to come of it, though, was Hiccup to end up for the next two months trying to recreate a light bulb of his own. His attempts never really worked, of course, as he really didn't have the proper tools or resources to make it happen, not to mention the technology was a good 500 years ahead of his time. On the other hand, some of Hiccup's ideas ended up really entertaining, and fit right in with his walking disaster image.

His most memorable attempt was when he tried putting a superheated piece of metal into a small glass container he had somehow gotten his hands on. Naturally, when hot metal touches cold glass, bad things happen, and both shattered, sending tiny pieces of glass and metal

shards all over the forge. Gobber was not happy with the end result, and even after having Hiccup clean it up, they still found glass shards in their boots for another 2 weeks after that.

On another subject: like I mentioned earlier, dragons are well known to be able to withstand ridiculous temperature extremes thanks to a number of things, not the least of which their scales and ability to breathe fire, so to an extent, I inherited that ability too. The looks I got when I walked into school on a 10 degree day in nothing but a short sleeve were enough to revert to my usual clothing regime in mid winter (even if still a bit lighter than normal), but they were almost worth it. Luckily there were only a few people who knew the reason why, and I intended to keep it that way.

Nevertheless, I have never been fond of winter weather, and had always found myself to be happiest in the middle of summer: hot weather, everything alive and growing, more fun things to do of my interest, etc. So needless to say, I was ecstatic when spring finally rolled around, and the temperatures started warming up. On top of that, my 18th birthday came around the same time, and the epic birthday party I had did plenty to liven my spirits up after the cold weather. Even in Berk, there were signs of spring greenery, but as always when you're that far north, the end of their winter was still a little ways off.

At school, things had been quiet, or at least as quiet as you can get when in senior year of high school, and though I had managed to keep my secret under wraps with the help of Leighton and Cameron, there's always at least one person who finds out when you slip up, so my other good friend Josh managed to find his way into our secret friend group. However, as with anything this monumentally outlandish, it wouldn't be able to be kept under wraps forever, and it wouldn't be long before something finally happened to make me release my world-changing secret. Little did I know that once that happened, the avalanche of connected events that would come to pass would change the way both worlds work forever.

## 25. Chapter 25: The Accident

\*\*A/N-This will be the first chapter with anything truly serious. Not terribly angsty, but anyone who's been in such a situation knows what it would be like.\*\*

\*\*Also, despite the note in the last chapter you will not be seeing me waiting for a certain number of replies before posting new chapters, that was just an experiment, testing to see if it actually makes any differences. Chapters will still be out regularly around the weekends. Speaking of chapters: only 11 more to go before Book 1 is finished, and we move on to the next part of the series, so stay tuned!\*\*

\*\*As always, read and review, I like hearing what you think!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 25</p>

The Accident

"Hey Leighton! Wait up!"

School was finally ending for the day, and even better, it was a wonderfully warm late April day. Leighton and Cameron had both become regular visitors to my house and had become good friends, Leighton especially, with Hiccup and, surprisingly, Ruffnut. But at the moment, we were heading to the science room after school to see the animals and help the teacher keep the kids from being too rowdy.

"What's up?" she asked as I jogged up next to her. I shrugged. "Not much, but I was in Berk a couple days ago," I began, "and sorry for not letting you know sooner, but the gang has been working on a plan for picnic on the far side of the island and were wondering whether or not you'd like to come along. And is it just me, or does Ruffnut seem to have a hidden agenda with you?" Leighton chuckled as we reached the science room and went in. "Well, I'll have to see if I can, but I think that'd be fun," she said. "And yeah, Ruff bet me a Berk coin that I wouldn't be able to convince Hiccup to let me ride Toothless. I want to prove her wrong." I laughed. "So, do you girls ever stop competing?" I asked. "It's either Astrid and Ruff or you and Ruff, or so on. It's like watching one of those cheesy kid flicks with the two competing teenagers in the background."

The science room was pretty quiet that day, most of the kids playing outside in the warm weather (can't blame them really, I would have been too, if it weren't for the fact that it was feeding day for all the animals), so the hour went by relatively peacefully, Leighton, Cameron and I feeding the snakes and making sure they all had water for the weekend and making sure the few kids in the classroom (my sister included) kept in line. Leighton called home and queried on whether or not she was free the next day, and found she had an open day, so that was settled.

The hour wasn't completely dull, as Cameron was still a bit shaky about the idea of Berk and everything existing, so it was easy and entertaining to startle him with details as simple as color changing eyes. Being in a large room where no one is going to notice such things helps too. But eventually it was time to go, and after we got all of the kids out of the room, we helped the teacher lock up the room, and we headed out.

As we walked down the hallway, Cameron and Leighton tagging along with us for a little bit, I turned to Cameron. "So have you heard anything about the picnic this weekend?" I asked, having already told Cameron about it. He shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't go, have some things I need to do," he replied. I looked up to see his cousin, Sarah, waiting by the door. "I'm surprised she hasn't found out yet," I whispered. Cameron shrugged. "Not sure how she would react. Probably better than I did," he whispered back. It was probably true, too, as when Cameron found out, he freaked.

We reached the doors leading outside to the courtyard of the school, and Sarah, gave Cameron a glare. "You're late," she said. "Your mom was about to send me in to get you." Cameron winced. "Sorry, we got to talking a bit." He turned to me. "I'll see you on Monday then." I nodded, and turned to Leighton. "I'll see you tomorrow." She nodded. "Won't be late, I promise." I waved Holly over. "Come on, we don't want to be-"

SCRRREEEEEEE! BANG!

Every one of us whipped around to see the source of the noise. It turned out to be the worst cause I could think of at the time.

"Oh, no."

Out past the football and soccer fields, on the main road, two cars had skidded out of control on a patch of water on the road, and collided dead on. Even worse, looking closely, I could see one car starting to catch on fire.

"Leighton, hold my stuff and keep Holly here!" I yelled, dropping my book bag and backpack, grateful I had decided not to bring a plant that day. "I've got to do something about that!" She instead jumped forward, grabbing me by the shoulder. "Hawken wait! What about your secret? You can't show anyone, they'll freak!" I sighed. "That's better than letting whoever's in that car die in an explosion," I returned. "Someone could be seriously hurt, and I wasn't given this gift to sit back and just enjoy the fun!" Leighton let go and nodded. "Yell if you need our help." "Just call 911!"

I turned and started running across the courtyard, ignoring the fact that there was a parking lot and a football field with an active game in the way. Reaching the lot, I jumped up and unfurled a pair of grayish wings, powering them down and gliding across the field, ignoring the stares I was getting from the kids below. I landed next to the cars and skidded to a halt, putting the wings away and walking up to the fire, which had spread to cover the entire front half of the car, and was following a flow of liquid on the ground. I pulled in a breath, and, focusing on another picture, let it loose, a blast of freezing air dousing the fire, the crackle of ice replacing it. I walked up to the door of the car and looked in. There were two people inside, a young, brown haired woman in the driver's seat. I grabbed the handle of the door and pulled, but the crash had crumpled it closed. I decided to try another tactic, claws stretching out of my fingers, and I grabbed the edge of the door, pulling it out with draconic strength.

SCREEEECH!

The squealing noise of metal on metal stung my ears, but I ignored it as I pulled the door wide enough to see inside. "Are you okay?" I asked the girl.. She nodded, but looked understandably frightened, after just having been in a burning car. I extended a now clawless hand. "Can you get out?" "I... I think so," she replied. I stepped to the side, but kept my hand out, which she took and slowly stepped out of the car, obviously wincing from the bruises forming across her arms. Once she was out of the car, she turned to look back in, at the other passenger. "Is-is Claire alright?" she asked, trembling. I looked inside at the other passenger, a younger blonde girl, who wasn't moving. I looked back at the driver. "I'll find out. In the meantime, help keep those people away from the accident, I don't want anyone else hurt." She nodded and pulled out her phone, no doubt also calling 911, and shooed away the kids gathering along the fence. I moved to the other side of the car, and yanked the door open in the same manner I had with the driver side door. Gently, I unhooked Claire from the seat and checked her over for a pulse or anything broken. Luckily, it looked like she'd just fainted, and was out cold. I carefully picked her up and brought her over to the sidewalk and

laid her down.

"Hello, 911? There's been a car crash at, uh.." the driver covered the phone and looked down at me, still trembling. "Where... what road is this?" "Tell them the crash is on the main road in front of Frontier Academy and University Schools," I replied, and told her the address. She stammered the information into her phone, then said, "Please hurry" and closed the phone. She looked down at her friend, laying on the grass. "Is she alright?" she asked. "As far as I can tell, she's just unconscious, but she probably has some bruises," I said. "Stay here and watch her, I need to go check the other vehicle." The driver sat down next to her friend, and I ran up to the other car.

This time, I was able to open the passenger door without the use of claws, and found another young, black haired girl. "Are you alright?" I asked. She shook her head, tears falling down her cheeks. "Mmmyy... my leg hurts real bad," she said. "I can't move it!" I looked down at her leg, and saw the dashboard was crumpled in on her, and her leg was bent at a strange angle from the pressure. As far as I could tell, though, it wasn't broken completely. I reached in and placed my hands around her leg, and shoved upward on the plastic, causing it to bend and crack, but lift up off of her leg. She gave a cry of pain as her leg moved back to a more normal position, and now I could see some swelling.

"Okay, this may hurt a little, but I need to get you out of the car and over to the grass," I said. She nodded, and I carefully scooped her out of the seat, taking care to support her leg so it didn't move. I walked over and set her down against the fence on the grass. She grimaced in pain, but stayed put. I walked to the driver side of the car, and found it much worse than the other doors, having had most of the impact. I wrenched the door open, and found the driver in much worse shape. He was unconscious, and there wasn't any evidence of breathing either. There was also a large cut across his forehead, and swelling was apparent. I carefully checked for a pulse, and found one, but it was very weak. I listened closely, altering my hearing, and heard faint wisps of breathing, but he was in bad shape. This time, there wasn't any way I could move him out of the car without hurting him more, either. I undid the seatbelt, but if I did anything more, I would cause more damage to his head, and from the fact that the steering wheel was bent, I suspected he had some internal damage as well. I looked over the car at the passenger.

"Can you tell me his name?" I asked her. "It's T-Thomas," she grimaced. From the pain in her voice I second-guessed my diagnosis: she probably had a hairline fracture in her leg, but as it was, I didn't have anything to treat it. However, we didn't have to worry any more, as around the corner...

WWHHHEEEE00000! WWHHHEEEE00000!WWHHHHEEEE0000!

The ambulance came racing up to the scene, followed by police cars and a fire truck. I smirked, as there was no fire to deal with anymore, but I was glad they were here now. They came up and stopped right next to the accident, police getting out and starting to redirect the traffic that had gathered to watch. A team of medics and firefighters rushed over to Claire and the raven-haired girl (who I later found out was named Jessica) and began to check them over for injuries, taking out a brace and bandages for Jessica's leg. Another

group headed over to the unconscious driver and began cutting open parts of the car in the way, and checking him over. Meanwhile, a police officer came up to me.

"Excuse me," he started, "but were you here when the accident occurred?" I shook my head. "Not exactly, I was in the parking lot by the school," I replied. "But I can try and piece together what happened, if you want." The officer nodded. "That would be very helpful, yes."

I started off telling him that the cars had been coming down the road in different directions, and had hit the water that was on the road, making them skid, and the cars had hit nearly dead on. He nodded.

"And was there anyone else here at the time?" "Not that I know of."

"Alright. I overheard also, that the girl who made the call said you had helped them out of the car, and that it was on fire earlier." He gestured to the car covered in the sheet of ice. "Now, from the looks of the doors, there is no way anyone could have opened them normally, and it's not every day I find a car in an accident covered in ice. How did you put it out?" I winced. "It's, uh, complicated, I'd rather not explain it here. As for the doors, same story."

The officer gave me the fisheye, but shrugged it off. "It was a good idea that the passengers were moved from the car, though you may have risked the leg of the one over there," he pointed to the raven-haired girl. I shrugged. "Better than being stuck in a car with her leg getting crushed. And I thought it would help speed up the time it took to get everyone out safe." The officer nodded. "Very well." He eyed the ice again. "Are you sure you can't tell me how you put out the fire?" I shook my head. "Better that we focus on the accident for now, I think," I said. "The explanation is more of a headache than it's worth." "Then I hope you can give it to us later, when this is dealt with," the officer said. He looked over at the man who they were moving out of the car, the one I had been unable to help. "What about him?" "There didn't seem to be any way for me to move him without causing more injury at the time. he seems to be in bad condition, and if those instruments they have on him tell me anything, it's that it was a good idea I didn't move him."

Before the officer could ask me anything more, we were interrupted by another officer. "Hey Matt," he yelled, running up to us. "We've got a serious problem, that guy's in worse condition than we thought, according to the medics." The medics had placed the man on a stretcher and had strapped him down so that he wouldn't move around too much, and had what looked like an oxygen mask on him. One of the medics heard the other officer and nodded. "He's in critical condition," they said, "there's something obstructing his windpipe and we can't get it dislodged. He's also got some major internal hemorrhaging. I don't know why he's worse off than the others in the accident, but if we don't get him to the hospital within the next 5 minutes, we won't be able to save him."

The officer I had been talking to, Matt, looked down at the driver. "Can we call Flight for Life?" "Already did, they won't be able to get over here until it's too late. We won't make it by ambulance either, too much traffic right now, and the drive's still 8 minutes without." The mood quickly darkened at this thought, and Jessica gave a sob at the thought of Thomas dying.

"I can get you there in three minutes flat," I blurted, before

realizing what that meant. At the time, though, I didn't care. There was a life to save, and if I didn't do something, I might as well have given up my abilities then and there. "How are you going to do that?" the medic asked. "Unless you can magically fly us there or teleport us, he's not going to make it." "Look, you'll just have to trust me on this one," I said. "We're wasting time as it is, and yes, I can fly you there, as long as there's someone willing to hold Thomas in place along the way. I can carry four people along with the stretcher."

For a second, no one moved, then the two officers and two of the medics stepped forward. I smiled and nodded. "Good, now just stand back for a minute." I stepped out into the open street, looked both ways to make sure the firefighters had the traffic under control, and started transforming.

My arms lengthened and formed into massive wings, two rows of movable sails running down my back, and a tail stretched out behind me as I grew in size, until I was twice the size of a normal Monstrous Nightmare. I kept the teeth short to keep the image less daunting, but from the reaction of the crowd, it didn't do much.

I turned to face the group that had volunteered and knelt down, lowering the sails. "Yes, I know, shocking, and we can discuss this later, but hurry up and get him on!" I snapped. They didn't move for a second, then first the medics and then the officers moved forward, carrying Thomas, and gingerly set him down on my back. Two other medics came forward and wrapped straps around me, making sure the stretcher wouldn't slide off. Then the four volunteers climbed on as instructed, though unsurprisingly reluctantly, and positioned themselves to hold onto the stretcher. I looked at the medics remaining, who were taking care of the other passengers. "Make sure the hospital knows we're coming, and have them on the flight deck and ready to take him." They nodded, and I turned, making sure not to bump the stretcher around too much, flared my wings, and lifted off. I rose up into the air first, then turned and powered up, heading for the hospital, trying to keep the ride as smooth as possible.

"Everything alright?" I asked. "A little windy, and kind of strange!" one of the officers yelled back through the wind. I laughed. "That's just part of it, I'm afraid. Make sure he doesn't slip off!" We shot over the city, in a beeline for the hospital, and when it came into view, I angled myself down to land next to the helicopter. As promised, there was a group of staff on the roof, waiting, and they stumbled back upon seeing me approach. Slowly, I came in to land, and touched down as gently as possible to the landing pad. I bent down, and immediately, the medics on my back threw off the straps and slowly slid the stretcher down and off my back. They looked over at the rest of the hospital staff. "What are you waiting for?" they yelled. "This man is in critical condition!"

That got them moving. They ignored the dragon on the pad as best as possible, and helped take Thomas into the hospital. Once I was assured they were going to take care of him, the officers got back on, and I lifted off to head back to the school. After all, their squad cars were there, not here at the hospital. At least that was convenient, as I still had to get back to Holly as well, and make sure I wasn't needed for anything else. By now, I'm sure officer Matt could answer his own questions about the ice and claw marks on the

cars.

We flew back and I landed first at the accident scene, where the other medics and firefighters had gotten everything taken care of, and were ready to take the other people involved in the accident to the hospital. Claire was now awake and luckily for me, she was young enough to take the appearance of a dragon at a crash scene relatively lightly. Or at least as lightly as anyone would. The girls all thanked me for helping them, and Jessica showed me the brace on her leg, saying she was going to have to get a cast. I nodded and smiled, and after making sure I wasn't still needed for anything (I just had to give my name, surprising it took them that long to ask), I flew back over to the school courtyard where Leighton, Cameron, Sarah, and my sister were waiting. I could tell that there was a lot of explanation that would be happening soon, but for now, we were all just happy to be going home after that. I turned to Leighton.

"Thanks for watching Holly," I said. "She stayed out of trouble right?" My sister protested at this, but Leighton nodded. "Yes, though she was convinced that she should go help. I hope you realize that there's going to be a lot of prodding about what you just did when we get back to school, right?" I nodded. "You're going to have to tell us what all happened down there too," Cameron added, crossing his arms. I laughed. "Explaining that to you guys will be the easy part. Dealing with the rest of the world is going to give me the headache that's coming." "Well, at least you'll have some of us to help," he said. I smiled and grabbed my stuff, and gestured to Holly. "We've got to go though, before I get caught by the crowds. See you later!"

We walked to the car and got in, and then Holly turned to me. "So now that everyone knows, what are you going to do?" she asked. I sat in silence for a minute, then started the car up. "I don't know, but it's going to take a few weeks to get everything calmed down again."

And it was very true. The next few weeks, with all the attention such a world-shattering secret would bring, would be hell on earth for me.

## 26. Chapter 26: Aftermath

\*\*A/N-Hope the last chapter was a little more exciting for everyone, though we still have the biggest event yet to come: just a couple more chapters before that.\*\*

\*\*As always, read and review!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 26</p>

Aftermath

"May I ask just what you were thinking?"

I was right when I said I was going to have a bad time. When I got home, the second I mentioned the incident of earlier to my mom, she

went right into her motherly interrogation of what could prove to be a disastrous idea.

"What do you mean, what was I thinking?" I answered with a question, hoping she'd figure out what I was thinking, what I'd told her before, so I wouldn't have to go into the whole spiel. "I mean," she began as she put a pot on the stove for dinner, "Did you forget about the whole, 'I want to keep this a secret as long as possible or the world would go crazy' thing you went on about? You realize now that is exactly what will happen, yes? The whole world will be on us about it." I sighed and rubbed my forehead, glancing over at the living room where Holly was wisely staying out of the argument.

"Remember what I said when I first told you about all of this, when you found out?" I asked. "I was given this gift, these abilities, not just to use them at my leisure and hang out in Hiccup's world, where this gift has stayed for who knows how long, but in order to lend a helping hand to people in both worlds." I gestured to the back yard, where the faint glow of the portal could barely be seen behind the tree. "That's why the portal opened, why I found it. I'm meant to do something, not just there but here. And besides, we both know I really don't like violence or pain, so the number of injuries or fatalities that I see myself I would like to try keeping to a minimum." I looked back at my mom. "Incidents like that crash today were the reason why I received the gift in the first place."

My mom gave me a hard look before she went back to the counter. "Yes, I remember," she said quietly. "I only hope you're ready for the torrent of attention that is about to flood you." I nodded. "I'll deal with it as best as I can," I replied, before smiling. "Besides, how hard can it be for a dragon to keep a bunch of nosy reporters away from his home?"

Indeed, that evening was very quiet as I ran the scenarios through my mind, what was coming. When I went back to school on Monday, anyone who had heard about the crash, or seen it themselves were going to pound me with questions, and they would tell anyone who hadn't heard about it, that is if the news didn't immediately cross Facebook that evening (another downside of modern technology). After that happened, I'd get contacted by the local police and medical staff, since they had seen me in person, followed by local reporters and journalists. I shrugged, deciding that may not be any worse than the interview that had gotten me and my hobbies on the front page only a week or so before...or maybe not. After the locals had enough, national interest would be had, followed by the rest of the world. the next few weeks would be interesting, to say the least.

The next day was Saturday, obviously, and as promised Leighton showed up for the picnic with the gang, and we headed in through the portal and into the cove. We were a little early, and the rest of the group wasn't there yet, so we waited for a little while for them to show up and prepare for the picnic.

"By the way," Leighton began, leaning up against a nearby rock, "figure out how you're going to deal with all the crowds and attention starting Monday?" I sighed and leaned up against a tree. "There's not much I can do except be honest about it." I grinned and continued, "Though there's nothing that says I can't play total pain-in-the-butt smart alec and annoy everyone into losing interest." We laughed a bit at that, and continued the casual banter for a few

more minutes.

Hawken! I stood up and looked up at the sound of my name, and looked in the direction of the village. Just clearing the trees was Hiccup and Toothless, Toothless having already spotted me and Leighton below. Right behind them were the rest of the gang. As always, I spotted Ruffnut and Tuffnut arguing about something pointless, causing their Zippleback to veer off course and nearly hit a tree. With a grumble and a quick snap of the necks he dealt with the two obnoxious teenagers, and glided down.

"About time you guys showed up!" I yelled as they all touched down. Everyone got a few chuckles as Leighton took a couple steps and a stumble backward to make room, but quieted quickly when she glared. They all knew she was fairly unaccustomed to dragons, and a bit shy, though no one would dare call out that observation.

"Sorry about being late," Astrid said, jumping off of Thorn to check the picnic supplies she brought. The rest of the teens did the same. "Snotlout slept in late, like usual, and we had a small incident with the food and Sidewinder over there." As she said this, she gave a pointed glare at the Zippleback. ::What?:: he protested. ::It's not our fault the food was left sitting out in the open, with no sign saying it wasn't begging to be eaten by us.:: Having two heads, Zipplebacks had a tendency to refer to themselves in multiples.

"Ah, well, I hope at least everyone has everything we need now, then?" Affirmative nods came from everyone, and they started to turn back toward the dragons. "Oh, and by the way," I began, looking toward Leighton, "Hiccup, Astrid, could I borrow you two for a moment?" They both looked over at me questioningly, then walked over. I gestured for them and Leighton to come over by the tree I had been leaning against beforehand. "Leighton here had something she was wanting to ask."

Leighton shot me a slightly embarrassed, but slightly thankful, glare and turned to the other teens. Hiccup and Astrid focused on her. "Uh, well, the uh, last time I saw you guys, I, uh, made a sort of bet with Ruffnut," Leighton stammered. "I kind of, uh, need your permission in order to win the bet." "Well, what is it?" Astrid asked, never what you could call the "flawlessly patient" type. "Well, Ruff bet me that I would never be able to ride Toothless, since she never has, and she's known you for longer, and I am a bit of an, uh, outsider." Hiccup gave a snort of laughter. Though not around all the time like I was, Leighton had become good friends with some of the teens. She continued talking. "Second, she said that I wouldn't be able to get a ride, because you're with Hiccup, Astrid, and it would make you jealous since I'd have to ride with Hiccup." Astrid raised an eyebrow and looked in Ruff's direction, as I hid laughter of my own. I had no doubt Astrid wouldn't have objections now, since she always wanted to prove her friend wrong. "I don't have a problem with it," she said, confirming my suspicions, "especially since I trust you and Hiccup plenty well enough, and everyone knows Hiccup's with me." Leighton nodded, and turned to Hiccup, who raised his hands up in surrender. "Hey, if Astrid's fine with it, I don't have a problem either, but I think we're all forgetting one very important person you need to ask." he glanced over at the scaly black reptile laying in the sun, clearly impatient to get moving.

Hiccup waved his hand at the Night Fury, who everyone knew was

extremely selective about who rode on him, and so far, only Astrid and I had that privilege. Fishlegs couldn't for weight reasons (no one had figured out how, or bothered to ask why, Horrorcow continued to carry him around), and the twins and Snotlout occasionally still got tail slaps from Toothless, let alone were they ever going to get rides.

We wandered over to Toothless, who saw us and got up. ::Finally, are we leaving or not?:: he asked. "Actually Toothless," I began, "Leighton was wanting to know if you'd be willing to let her ride this once. Hiccup and Astrid don't have a problem, and Ruffnut made a bet with her." Toothless let out a draconic version of a laugh, and "grinned" mischievously in Ruffnut's direction. ::What, a kind friend of yours and Hiccup, as well as a chance to get back at Miss Destruction?:: he queried sarcastically. ::I don't see why not.:: With that, he knelt down and motioned Hiccup and Leighton to get on. I grinned. "That would be a most definite yes."

The trip to the picnic site was rather entertaining, what with the fuming Ruffnut, who had started going off the second she noticed who Leighton was riding with, as well as the fact that neither dragon nor rider had put up any resistance to the idea. Everyone knew about her not-so-secret crush on Hiccup, and her envy at his riding the infamous Night Fury, so the irony of one of the shyest girls I know getting a ride instead was not lost on any of us. Once we got to the site, a peaceful meadow on the other end of the mountains from Berk, Leighton got the promised silver coin, one of the forms of trade in the northern regions here and not something you'd ever find in our world, and we all got an enjoyable picnic with a great view of the ocean.

"Oh, by the way guys," I began as I munched on an apple, "I have some extremely big news I forgot to tell you." I waited for a minute as everyone sat up, most of the dragons not included. "What happened?" Hiccup asked. "Yesterday my world finally got their first big glimpse of who and what I really am now." Astrid, who was taking a sip of water from a canteen, immediately drenched Snotlout at that. While the twins laughed as the teen turned bright red, Astrid turned back to me, eyes wide. "What happened?" she exclaimed. "Where was all of the 'keep it a big secret and no one can know' stuff?" Everyone knew about the precautions I had been trying to take to keep those who knew about my secret quiet and down to a minimum. "Was there a fight or something?" Fishlegs asked. I shook my head. "More serious. There was car crash." More gasps followed, as I had explained to everyone there what cars were and how dangerous they could be previously.

"Were you in the crash?" Astrid asked. "Yeah, I don't see any bruises or anything," Tuffnut said. "Yeah, that would have made bragging rights around here," Ruffnut echoed. I shook my head. "No, I wasn't in the crash, but there were some people who were badly injured," I explained. "Did you use your super strength to save them or something?" Fishlegs asked, goofy smile on his face. I shook my head and smiled. "Only to get the doors opened, they were damaged real badly. Problem is, while three of the people there were mostly fine, one guy could have died, so I ended up flying him to the hospital." "The what?" "Hospital. It's like a much larger version of your healer's home." "Well, is he okay?" Astrid asked. "The guy, I mean." I shrugged. "Don't know. I haven't heard anything since the crash. I intend to find out when I get back though." "Hah! I doubt it was that

hard," Snotlout boasted. "I could have saved him easy. With one hand behind my back."

There was a loud CRACK! as Astrid turned and socked Snotlout across the jaw. "Ow! Hey, it's true," Snotlout complained. "Yeah, and I'm a Terrible Terror," Astrid shot back. She finished the problem with a roasted fish flying at Snotlout's face. Leighton turned to me. "Is he always this big of a showoff?" she asked. "Worse than this, usually," Hiccup muttered, and we chuckled, breaking out into actual laughter as Fireworm wandered over to clean the fish off of Snotlout's face.

"Anyway," Astrid said as we calmed down, "What're you planning on doing about the situation now?" I shrugged. "Not much I can really do, except deal with it as it rolls out. I'll probably end up showing everyone eventually, but I'm planning on making finding out more about me as big of a pain as I possibly can. They know I can turn into a dragon, but the less they know, the better, I think."

The banter continued for a couple of hours, then we ended our time with some games of tag and a Viking version of 'Truth and Dare', though more dare than anything else. We had to calm things down with a group strategy game after things got out of hand though, what with Tuffnut daring Snotlout to tackle Toothless. I doubted he'd be comfortable sitting down for a while. Eventually, the sun started going down, and in Berk, that means it gets cold, fast, so Leighton and I headed back to our own world, with only a few minutes to spare before she had to leave. Pretty good timing, if you ask me.

\* \* \*

><p>Sunday morning brought with it, however, the first real signs of public announcements about my endeavor: an article on the front page of the local newspaper about me and the rescue:</p>

\*\*Strange Occurrences: Reports of Boy Helper at Rescue with an Impossible Secret\*\*

On Friday afternoon, an average roadside crash in front of a local school took a turn for the strange and impossible when eyewitness reports appeared about who-and in some ways, what- was involved in helping rescue the injured passengers in the cars involved.

Medics and officers arriving on the scene were confronted with a sight strange enough, as the less injured passengers had already been helped out of the cars by a teenage boy from the nearby school, a feat that should have been impossible without heavy machinery, as the doors on both cars were crushed together by the crash. What's more, every opened door appeared to have strange puncture marks along the edges, where they had been wrenched free. One car showed signs of a conflagration, but instead of fire, only a thick layer of ice was present, unusual for such a warm day.

The teen present had explained that he had helped the crash victims out of the cars, one unharmed, one unconscious but unhurt, and one young girl with what was later to be found a hairline fracture along her leg. The fourth passenger was left in the car, according to the boy, because of the severity of his injuries, and the teen did not wish to risk further injury moving him. Medics later confirmed that the man's internal injuries were severe enough to warrant death, and

no vehicle would have gotten him to a hospital fast enough.

As of 5:00 pm on Saturday, Thomas Arnold was at the hospital in critical, but improving, condition. When medics at the hospital and the officers present at the crash site were interviewed, they were hesitant to explain how they could have transported the man so rapidly. When pressed, however, they gave a story impossible to believe, were it not for the nearly 1,000 reports through the city confirming it: they took him to the hospital by dragon.

Through ways nobody understands yet, as he has not been seen since, the boy at the crash somehow gained the ability to transform into what has been previously thought to be a mythical creature, a dragon, and persuaded the crew to let him carry Thomas to the hospital site. After this extraordinary feat, he returned to the site and left without any more information to be given. As of yet, we have no leads as to who this boy is, or where he is from, but if the reports given can be believed (and with so many there is very little doubt that this happened), who is this strange teen, and how could he have possibly acquire such an impossible ability?

I sighed and looked over at my mom, who was making herself breakfast, and held up the paper. "I take it you saw the article then?" I asked. My mom nodded and moved the eggs she was cooking to a plate, and walked over to the table. "It's hard to miss a front-page article about my own son, especially when it features an image, admittedly blurry and reptilian, but a picture nonetheless of him flying over half the city." She took a bite of her eggs, and looked at the paper, seeming to contemplate her next question.

"I really hope you know exactly what you're doing," she said, "and what you're getting yourself into." I groaned. "Mom, we've been over this like a hundred times this weekend. Yes, I know exactly what's going to happen, as well as what could happen, and I think I'm prepared enough for it."

BRRIIINNNNGG! BRRRIIINNGG!

I jumped up and ran over to the phone to see who was calling. Luckily, the name on the caller ID was familiar. I picked it up.

"Hey Leighton." "Hey Hawken. Did you see the article this morning?" I sighed. "Yeah, I saw. It's begun officially now I guess." "You sure you can handle this?" I stayed quiet for a moment, thinking. "Well, if you're offering to help," I drawled, "then any way you can think of to keep people at a distance is greatly appreciated." "Well, I, uh, I'm not sure what I can really do. I'm not all that outspoken around strangers, you know that. I'll see what I can do to help at school tomorrow." "Alright," I said, "I'll see you tomo—" I stopped as a realization struck me. "Hold on a minute." I walked over to the calendar and looked at Monday. A wave of relief flooded over me. "Actually, Leighton, we don't have school tomorrow, remember?" "Wait, what? I'm sure we did." "No, it's a day off. I have another day to plan before all this blows up." "Well, great then! I'll see you on Tuesday in that case." "Alright, talk to you later."

I hung up the phone and let out a long, drawn out sigh. Holly, who had just gotten up, walked in and gave me a confused look. I shrugged and turned to my room. "Time to think hard about this."

I visited Hiccup and the gang on the day we had off to help me clear my mind so I could think straight. Unfortunately, the three most "Vikingly" of them just wanted to focus on nothing but how it could all go wrong. So for about half an hour, my mind instead got muddier and muddier. The only thing that helped was after I couldn't take listening to Snotlout and Tuffnut try to top their "worst case scenario" contest, I dumped them and Ruffnut into the pond in the cove. Hiccup was a little more helpful, suggesting a race around the village ( using the dragons, of course). That was helpful, but eventually I had to head home and brood about it all.

\* \* \*

><p>Tuesday. Just realizing what day it was gave me a headache, and I wanted nothing more than to bury my head under the covers and scream. Unfortunately, much like my parents, I was of the mindset right then that if I got myself into this mess, I would have to dig myself back out again. The day before, I had discussed with my mom and dad about what I was planning, and after some hesitation, I managed to convince my dad to drive me to school in the morning. I would be taking a very different route home. Arriving at school, I braced myself and stepped out of the car, heading for art class.</p>

"Hawken!" I whirled around, ready to scare the heck out of whoever it was and shut them up for the day. Who I found was not expected, however. "Leighton? But you never get to school on time, let alone early." Leighton shrugged as she walked ahead and pulled the door open. "I thought this one day might be the one where it would be for the best, you know?" I nodded. "By the way, don't scare me like that, I'm really on edge. It's never a good idea to get a dragon on edge, even a half-dragon." Leighton shrugged again. "Sorry. Come on, let's get to class."

Luckily class was only right around the corner from the entrance there, though I have to say, school starting at 7:35 in the morning really puts a damper on my mood anyways. Doesn't help matters when kids walk into class giving me strange glances and whispering about who knows what. I decided not to use my enhanced hearing, as I knew it would only frustrate me more to know what they said. On the other hand, throughout the morning that was all I got: strange glances and occasional whispers. I smiled as I went to lunch. No one was brave (or dumb?) enough to actually try and confront me about it just yet. I was glad, as I was almost certain someone would ask just one question, or give me some ridiculous nickname, and the flood would begin. But, sooner or later it was bound to happen.

"Hey, Hawken!" I growled under my breath and turned around from my path toward one of the science rooms where I always ate lunch. At least I can say Gareth isn't dumb enough to be unable to eventually put two and two together. "Is that how you suddenly got so good at fighting?" he asked as he walked up to me, a stern look on his face. I wasn't impressed, naturally, and shrugged it off. "Maybe, maybe not. Depends on two things: what are you referring to, and what's it to you?" Gareth crossed his arms. "You know exactly what I'm referring to. And I'm guessing that's how you were able to give me that Indian rug burn without actually doing anything either."

I smirked as I started walking off, reaching into my bag and pulling out a scrap of paper. "Hey!" Gareth yelled as he walked up next to me

again. "You didn't answer my quest—" his words died on his tongue as I held up my hand with the paper resting on it. I heated up my hand in an instant, causing the paper to not only burst into flames, but literally vaporize into a puff of smoke in front of Gareth's face. I grinned as I let my hand drop, and glared directly at him. "Does that answer your question?" I asked, faking innocence. I turned more serious then. "Look, I don't like being interrogated about things, and we all know you and I don't get along. Plus, I can do a lot more than just burn things, so unless you want to end up without any of your required assignments for the day, frostbitten arms and an entirely new hairdo, please don't patronize me." That shut him up, and I started walking away again, but my little paper stunt had caught the eyes of a few people.

A girl named Savannah walked up to me, though she stayed on nearly the other side of the hallway. "Hey Hawken, what was that?" she asked. "I thought I saw fire." I stayed silent, but Gareth took the liberty of answering. "Did you read the newspaper article on Sunday? The front page one?" Savannah laughed. "Everyone read that article. Such a ridiculous story. But I don't see what that has to—" "Hawken here is the dragon boy." Savannah quieted for a minute, looking at me, then started laughing again. "Oh, come on, nobody's going to believe that!" she gestured toward me. "Do you really think the plant boy would be capable of doing something like that?"

As she said that, she turned to look over at me. As she did so, my eyes melted to match a Night Fury's, slit pupils and all. Savannah choked on her laugh and gasped. "Oh. My. God," she whispered. I nodded. "Yes, everyone might as well know now. Unfortunately and for once, Gareth is telling the truth. But can I ask one thing?" Savannah slowly nodded. "Can you keep the questions down to a minimum? Please?"

And so began the first truly hectic day. Every single passing period, every single class, someone caught the story about my stunt in the hallway, or had seen it, and the questions, comments, and accusations started pouring in like Niagara Falls, with me barely holding an umbrella up to the flood. However, being the natural pain in the neck that I am, the best and clearest answers anyone got went along the lines of: "Yes, I can become a dragon," "Yes, I can breathe fire," "Yes, I carried that man to the hospital, and no, you're not getting a ride," and so on. After school, I found out some of my friends had been getting hammered with question too, like how long they had known, what else they knew, yadda, yadda, yadda. But my friends are my friends for important reasons: many of them think like me, or know me well enough, and weren't any more helpful in telling people what they wanted to know. However, that didn't stop a flood of people from following me to the science room, where I hang out after school.

"Will you people cut it OUT!" I snapped as I reached the door and opened it as the mob began volleying questions off again. At least I was able to gain some satisfaction out of watching everyone cringe for a moment, expecting some fiery outburst. "The information you know now is all you're going to get, unless I myself decided someone should know more. And that will be when I am good and ready to share it, so GET OFF MY BACK!"

I spun around and headed inside the science room, going straight to the back corner to get out the corn snakes that were there. The

science teacher, a good friend of mine, watched for a minute as I stormed across the room. "Hawken?" he began, "Is everything alright? What was all that yelling about?" I waved my hand around in the air. "Oh, I just became an instant reluctant celebrity, and nobody will leave me alone now." "By what do you mean?" I sighed and turned toward him, cringing as the door opened to the room, but sighing in relief again as Cameron walked in. "You read the article in the paper on Sunday, right?" The teacher nodded and chuckled. "Hard to miss something like that. Amazing what reporters will try to publish to get good ratings. I mean, no evidence has ever been found to suggest dragons existed, now or ever, and metamorphosis like that is physically impossible."

"Actually, the story is true," Cameron said as he walked over. My teacher just shook his head. "It's not possible. There's no scientific evidence—" "Science doesn't explain quite everything," I said, "though I have some theories on how this all works. Indeed, science didn't create the boy, or his gift. I should know, because I am that boy." The teacher gave a short bark of laughter. "That's a bit of a tale to tell, Hawken. There's no way you're...!" He trailed off as he watched scales as black as night ripple up my arms, and claws appear where I once had normal fingers a second before. I stopped there, and reversed the changes.

"Like I said, science as we know it doesn't explain everything," I remarked. "I am now a perfect living example." My teacher just stood there for a minute, flabbergasted. "But how... what... how in the world did you end up like that?" he asked, stammering and tripping over his words. "I've known you for seven years, and nothing like this has ever happened!" I gave a quiet laugh and looked around. Seeing as nobody else was in the room save for Cameron, as I had scared them all out, I decided I might as well tell him.

"You're one of the few people I feel I can trust with this," I said. "I'll give you a rough rundown of how this all happened." I sat down in a chair nearby with the corn snakes. "This ability isn't originally from our world at all. There's a sort of, uh, portal that I found, and it permanently connects our own world to one where the events in my favorite movie, How to Train Your Dragon, actually happened." I saw my teacher gaining a smirk on his face, and I pulled out one of Hiccup's charcoal pencils. "If you don't believe me, here's one of Hiccup's pencils. Anyway, I ran into a dragon when I found the portal, and she gave me this gift, which she said had come from God, and passed down for generations. Over the past year or so, I've been learning about how to use it and what this ability can do." I smiled. "I'll admit, becoming a dragon is the least of my tricks right now."

The conversation continued for about 15 minutes, before some younger kids finally got brave enough to walk into the room, following, not surprisingly, my sister. I wrapped up my story quickly and went back to dealing with the animals, until 4:00, when everyone had to head home. I smiled as I walked out the door into the hallway, followed by Cameron and my sister. It felt somewhat good knowing there was another adult who I had entrusted my biggest secret with, but I also still felt, naturally, a little shaky about the whole ordeal.

Outside, I prepared for one last show for the day. As the kids and adults started heading my way to flood me with questions again, black

scales began spreading across my body again. "Hawken, what are you doing?" Cameron asked. "I thought you wanted to keep from exposing yourself too much." I smiled as I halted the transformation for a moment. "everyone already knows I can turn into a dragon," I explained, "so it's not giving them anything more. And besides, going home this way will be a lot more fun!" I looked around at the crowd that had gathered around me. "People, if you want to see anything, I would advise everyone to step back!" I cautioned. Nearly everyone did, save for one bonehead in my class. As my long, black tail sprouted out and lengthened, I used it to push him back out of the way. He wasn't the nicest person, but I didn't feel like running anyone over as I transformed.

As I grew in size, I looked over at my sister. "Holly, you have everything you need, right?" I asked. "Yeah." "Then get on." I bent down, now at full size, and my sister climbed on, bags and backpack and all, and grabbed onto the row of crests along my spine. I was almost completely Night Fury now, except for one important detail: currently I looked like a big black lizard, as I had no wings. I grinned as I completed that last change, the skin on my sides appearing to sag and peel away, only to reveal nothing wrong underneath. Everyone around me gasped as I flared open all four of my wings, a full 48 feet of span. "See you tomorrow!" Cameron yelled. I grinned. "See you later!" I replied, and, gently because of the little sister on my back, I lifted up into the air catching a thermal over the parking lot and soaring upward, and over the city in the direction of my house.

No matter what part of the world you are in, or what world, for that matter, a dragon's eye view is an amazing sight. I watched houses and cars pass by beneath me, as Holly quietly commented to herself about everything she saw below. Looking down, I saw people in their yards and on the sidewalks, looking and pointing upward and scrambling around, probably trying to find a camera or something. It was almost certainly exciting to see a dragon fly overhead, especially when in our world such creatures only exist in books and movies. However, there's an extra level of weird added, when said dragon is carrying a backpack and book bag as well.

The flight ended relatively quickly, as flying is a whole lot faster than driving, as you don't have to follow roads when you know where you are going, and as soon as I landed on our driveway, Holly slipped off and I rapidly changed back. We slipped inside and waited for my mom to get home. As we waited, Holly suddenly realized something.

"Hey Hawken?" she began. "Hmm?" I replied. "What happens to stuff in your pockets when you change, since your clothes change with you?" That caught me off guard, as I had never thought about it. I reached down into my pocket, where my wallet and phone was, and found they were still there. "Don't know," I said. "Maybe it all just changes. Why are you asking this?" "Because I'm random, and I was just curious," she replied. I nodded and went to go do my homework.

"So I see you actually did decide to fly home today," my mom commented as she walked in the door. "I also heard some snippets on the radio and in the news about more dragon sightings." She smiled, knowing the explanation why, of course. I stood up from where I was doing homework (truly, the bane of a schoolboy's life, I tell you) and headed to the fridge to grab a drink. "Well, it's only just

begun, mind you," I said as I poured a glass of milk. "Most of the kids at school know for certain that the dragon boy is me, especially courtesy of my flight home with Holly." My mom finished putting her things away and turned to look at me. "So what can we expect next?" she queried. "Reporters at our front door? Police stopping by to make sure you're not some great threat to our city? Government attention?" "Yes," I replied simply. My mom frowned at me. "Yes what?" "Yes to all of those, unfortunately. We'll probably get reporters and journalists here, though a bunch will probably also show up at my school trying to find me, and I'm certain the police will stop by 'just in case' at least once. I can tell you this though: I am going to make it as hard as possible to get anything about it out of me, and very few people are going to find out about Berk. That is not really a risk I can take with anyone besides those who already know."

Sure as shooting, the next day as Holly and I headed to school (after my first flight we decided this was less costly and far more enjoyable), there were people everywhere, on the sidewalks, outside their houses, or looking out car windows, trying to see if they could catch a glimpse of the "dragon boy" as we flew by, and in the school yard a huge crowd of kids had gathered, watching and pointing as I glided down to ready for landing. I had decided to stick with my Night Fury form to keep the chatter down a bit and keep things simpler for me (the differently shaped crests and swept-back tailfins still set me apart though). As I neared, I saw some of my friends, like Leighton and Josh, moving the crowd back and out of the way as best they could so I could land without squishing a bunch of kids. Truth be told, though, there were a few I wouldn't have minded landing on, a few of the more obnoxious teens down there. Of course, they got a helping hand as everyone wised up and scrambled out of the way as my massive wings flared out to land.

Afterward, school was pretty much the same as the day before, except with a higher number of questions and pokes and prods (resulting in singed fingers when someone didn't get the message the first time; I do so love the Fireworm's ability). Unfortunately, however, now that everyone knew who I was, or better yet what I was, even the teachers began asking questions about this, that, and the other. Even though I'm better friends with them, the science teachers were the worst. I can't blame them though, as scientists naturally like to know how things work.

What's more, after the brief respite in the science room after school, when I went outside with my sister and friends at 4:00 I found a news van parked outside, waiting. Holly and I got flooded with people thrusting microphones in or faces and firing off question after question about everything. The only answer they got was an icy blue Frost dragon glare, and a good video clip of me turning into the usual Night fury form, launching off into the air and back toward home with Holly. That particular crew never bothered me again.

The next week passed with the same results, though everyone at school finally started quieting down and going back to normal as they finally got it through their heads that I wasn't exactly open to talk about the subject in detail. No, the attention now came from the news people that predictably became infected with interrogation fever. It was the biggest story since the presidential election, so everyone wanted a piece of the action. Every morning, every afternoon, I would find a news or radio station van parked near the school, waiting for

their chance at something new. Some of them were smart enough to stay calm and keep back when I came around, so I was nice and answered a few questions, but most were pushy and nosy, and were answered with a retreating back or flash of wings as I removed myself from the scene, disappearing into school or sky. At home, I ended up simply posting a handmade sign warning that all reporters or journalists or whatever should be smart and stay away, or else risk damaged equipment. It is my house, so anyone there without me or my parent's permission was trespassing anyway. only one news crew didn't heed the warning after it was put up, and received a roll of brand new film thoroughly coated in a beautiful pattern of ice crystals. It may have looked nice hanging from the camera, but not so nice when it came to them explaining to their superiors their mistake about approaching me.

The only other worry I really had was the one day the police did stop by to check things out and make sure I was safe. Being police and, due to the fact that the station was smart enough to send a kinder pair of officers, they received a pleasant conversation and a strong reassurance that I was here to help, not hurt, anyone. I have to say this though: an officer's questions cover things way too thoroughly for my liking, so I'm sure some of the answers they received were a little too vague for their liking. Nothing they can do, though, as I have a right to withhold whatever information I need to, and eventually they left me in peace.

After a couple of weeks, finally, everyone at school and in the news and protection departments finally laid off me, giving me a chance to breathe again and focus on finishing up school work. I also, unexpectedly, got to meet the victims of the crash a few weeks after the incident. Claire and her friend, who was named Vanessa, were relatively easy to deal with when I met them again, as they were naturally calm people, and didn't press any topic I didn't want to talk about. They also gave plenty of thanks for helping them out, to which I replied it was nothing. The other two victims on the other hand...

Jessica was an energetic young woman, even with her leg cast on, and wanted to know just how I did everything. It's hard to answer some questions when you don't even know the answers yourself. To slow her down was nearly impossible and every question I managed to answer was rapidly followed by yet another 30 related inquiries, most of which, of course, when unanswered. A guy can only say so much. Thomas was better, probably partly because he was still covered in bandages and mostly stayed in a chair the whole time, but he was still a man who wanted to know things.

"How exactly did you manage to transport me to the hospital in time?" We were at their house (Jessica and Thomas were related, so I guess curiosity runs in the family), where Thomas had been staying after finally being released from the hospital only 5 days before. I smiled. "That one I think I can answer," I replied. "I turned into a dragon large enough to carry the weight of more than one person, you and the rescuers holding the stretcher in place, and flew across town to cut down on time. With the condition you were in, you wouldn't have made it there in time otherwise." Thomas looked outside.

" What's it like being able to fly on your own power, and not need anything else to do so?" he asked. I laughed. "It's wonderful, that's for sure. Not having to follow roads or worry about really being

late, and no gas or insurance costs either." I smirked at that. "Truthfully, there's nothing that feels more free than gliding on your own through the sky." Thomas sat there for a minute, looking thoughtful.

"If... if it's not too much to ask, would it be possible to show me the dragon you became? I'd like to know exactly how my life was saved." There was a pause for a minute, and he continued, "Wow, that sounded really cheesy." I laughed and looked outside, in his back yard, and decided it couldn't hurt anything. I nodded. "Alright, but I can't give any free rides. It's almost time for me to leave anyway, so this'll have to be the last thing I do."

I stepped outside, followed by Jessica and Thomas. Even though Jessica had seen me do this at the crash site, she had seen it through pained eyes and hadn't really paid attention to much and wanted so see what happened clearly. I stepped out onto the grass, looked around to make sure I didn't hit anything, and focused on the same image.

Like someone had dumped a bucket of paint on me, I changed color completely, and the scales appeared, running across my body. My arms flared out and became webbed, and a long tail and the spine crests appeared behind me. I expanded to full size and finished, looking down at the two, who had looks of awe on their faces. "That's... quite an impressive mode of rescue," Thomas commented quietly. "Where did the stretcher go?" I knelt down and flattened the double row of spines, showing the flat spot where the stretcher had sat. "Right in the middle of my back. the police and medics who kept you from slipping off sat on either side." Thomas nodded, and was quiet for a moment again before speaking up. "Well, I really don't know how I could repay you, but I have to say it again: thank you for saving my life." I laughed as I shrank back to normal. "No payment necessary of any sort, my friend," I replied. "The gift itself was payment enough for anything I do." He nodded. We headed back inside and continued to talk for a couple minutes, then he thanked me again and I left.

Unfortunately, there's another few problems that come along with the price of being a new unorthodox celebrity: one, of course, is the attention I got, the other is the result of all that attention. Into mid May, I kept getting calls, emails, and letters from random people wanting me to do talk shows or movie stunts, radio calls, and so on. I'm not that kind of person, at all. Those who know me say I'm open around my friends, but other than that I stay with my own little things. I'm not majorly social, so ended up refusing the offers one after the other as they came in, with only short answers as to why, however vague I may have been. Another result of all the attention was my own form of paparazzi, people with expensive cameras and video recorders trying to get shots of me anywhere they could: at school, at home, around town, flying to or from somewhere, so on, so forth. Anyone stupid enough to actually group up and flash me blind with camera lights ended up with frozen or slightly crisped equipment and film, so I got some satisfaction out of ruining their day as they ruined mine. After what seemed like forever, though, most people (unfortunately not all) got the idea finally that I just wanted to be left alone unless you were in big trouble, or actually kind and the opposite of obnoxious and rude. Even then, though, you had better hope I was in a good mood or you'd simply receive a frosty glare and a flash of retreating wings as I left the area.

Luckily, most everything calmed down as school neared quitting time, and the best time of the year approached: the end of school, and the wide open spaces of summer break!

## 27. Chapter 27: Coal Within the Pearls

\*\*A/N- A couple notes really quick as it appears I need to reiterate a few details:\*\*

\*\*1. NO, I am not putting any review limits on this story, that was a test for reaction because I was curious.\*\*

\*\*2. I am not writing any more chapters of this story. It is already finished, I am just uploading chapters now.\*\*

\*\*3. This is a 6-book series, so you can expect new stories and new chapters for a long, LONG time to come.\*\*

\*\*4. Those of you who may have noticed chapters are not updated during the week, I am a very busy person, and weekends are the only times I have to post things regularly. That said, some chapters may come out at more irregular intervals as we go along because A) I like to build suspense for some of the exciting things, B) the next few books are shorter, with longer chapters (most of the time), and more of a 1-adventure storyline, and C) once I catch up to the point where I am actually typing out the rough drafts, chapters will come out whenever I can manage to type them out, which may mean week + intervals. \*\*

\*\*That won't be for at least a few more months though, so you will have your new chapters every weekend until then!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 27</p>

Coal Within the Pearls

SCHOOL'S OUT FOR SUMMER! SCHOOL'S OUT FOREVER!

Yes, I know, it's corny and overused, but there's really no other way to describe the feeling you get on your last day of school. As I headed out of the crowds on the football field (it was Yearbook signing time), I couldn't help but grin mischievously, as while I was out, my sister still had over half a week of school left. Ah, the life of a senior. The only hold-back was that my sister was on a sort of vacation that week, while I wasn't. Oh well, my high school years were over, and it was summer: a time to reconnect with your friends, have a good time, and prepare to empty your mind of all things education-related for 2 1/2 months of blissful freedom!

On the other hand, there were still jobs and college preparations in store for me, and I couldn't help but frown at that. Oh, well, save that thought for later.

"Leighton!" I yelled as I walked out onto the sidewalk. "Have you seen my friend Josh anywhere?" She shook her head as she walked over. it was my last day for a while seeing her, too, as she was only a

Junior and still had a year to go. "Sorry, no I haven't," Leighton replied. "Yearbook signing is a bit hectic, and I'm not a crowd person anyway." I groaned and leaned against a wall. "Eh, never mind, I just remembered he already left," I grumped. "But past that, I was wanting to ask about your availability in the next couple of days. Now that school's out, I'm going to be able to visit..." I trailed off as I looked around, making sure no one would hear us. Too much noise anyway, but one can't be too careful. "I'm going to be able to visit Berk more often," I said quietly. "I know that's going to make Hiccup and the gang very happy, since it means lots of goofing off, races, and whatnot, and I'm betting they're going to want to have a little party to celebrate. You know how Vikings are." Leighton nodded. "I remember the day I visited their winter festival," she said. "way too much drunken singing." I chuckled. "Yes, well at least the teens haven't started that up yet. But I was wondering if you'd like to take part in that."

Leighton frowned. "I don't know. I'm pretty busy for another week, you know that, and I know you have the graduation next Saturday, so that day I'm guessing won't work. Past that, I think I'm free." I nodded. "Well, I'll let you know what they decide and call you tomorrow, and you let me know vice versa." We agreed on that, and after I checked in with a couple of other friends before we went our separate ways (at least for a few days), I took off for the day.

That's another benefit of being a senior. At the Yearbook signing, everyone else is stuck basically doing nothing for a couple more hours, while we got to skip out early. I caught a huge thermal over the parking lot and soared up into the sky, and lazily glided all the way back to my house. It was kind of odd not having Holly along for the ride this time, but that's something I could get used to.

I landed at my house, and went in through the garage door. I headed into the kitchen, put my stuff down, and started to head over to get a snack. My mom was out on errands, and my dad was at work, so for the moment I had the house to myself. Or so I thought.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

I jumped and spun to face the sliding door. Just outside the door on the back patio was Astrid, and from the look on her face, she wasn't here to tell me about new plans for their own version of a graduation party. I ran over to the door and opened it quickly.

"Astrid! What's going on? Come in, quick. Did anybody see you?" She shook her head as she stepped in, and I closed the door. "No, I checked over both the fences, and Thorn's still on the other side of the portal." She sat down on one of the kitchen chairs, and I grabbed my own. "Want something to drink?" I offered. She shook her head. "No, thank you." I nodded and sat down.

"So why are you here?" I asked again. "I mean, from that look you've got it's not just some petty reason you've used my invitation." The "invitation" I had given to the village a few months ago allowed for any of the teens, within reason, to stop by if they had something they needed to ask or a favor they needed, and other Vikings if there was a bigger problem. So far, only the teens had taken advantage of, er, needed to use my invitation.

Astrid gave me a nervous look, and I got a chill. If Astrid's nervous, then something's gone wrong. "It's very bad, we think," she started. "Traders coming back from the more southern lands have been talking about huge changes down there for years, many of those not exactly kind to us and our ways, and those like us." I sucked in a breath. "If this is leading to where I think it is, yeah, it's bad." She nodded. "Anyway, these rumors and stories have been moving closer and closer our way, the most recent changes and conquests being as near as the mainland about 100 or so miles away from Berk. A new culture's begun over the past few generations, beginning near the Mediterranean sea." She gave me a look. "Yes, I know where that is," I replied tiredly. Astrid nodded again. "Well, this culture has been very unwelcoming of others, especially any religions that differ from theirs. Ours is very different, of course, and they want to change us, to force us to adopt their ways. Even worse, some of our recent dragon patrols have spotted ships, a whole fleet of ships, headed our way."

I moaned. "Oh, this can't be happening right now." Astrid sighed and spread her hands in apology and pleading at the same time. "But it is. The Crusaders have come back."

## 28. Chapter 28: The Preparations of War

### Chapter 28

#### The Preparations of War

Before I continue in on what happened, I feel it necessary to give a little background on these Crusaders. In the later part of the first millennium A.D. and continuing into the second, the first major Christian movement began, with the predecessors of Catholicism spreading through Europe and nearby areas and taking with them their new ideals and beliefs. Mind you, they were not as peaceful and all-forgiving as Christians are today. Crusaders were missionaries of sorts, sworn to make sure that if any people did not convert to their religion, they were killed when the missionaries returned from their "peaceful" trips with large armies. These were people of massive empires, ruled by powerful kings and under the command of the Holy Roman Empire. Now it might be a little clearer as to why a large fleet of these Crusaders off the shores of Berk were such bad news to us. Especially if they had made any trips here in the past.

I left a note on the table for my parents, explaining where I was going, and that I would likely be busy until late in the evening, and then Astrid and I headed out the back door, past my garden, and through the portal. As promised, Thorn was standing nearby, waiting for us, and Astrid hopped up and strapped herself into her saddle. I morphed into my typical dragon form, and we took off.

"So what did you mean when you said that the Crusaders have come back?" I asked as we glided toward the village. "Have they been here before?" "Sort of," Astrid replied. "A group of them came here a few years ago, back when we still fought the dragons. They told us that they could help us rid ourselves of the 'demons' we fought by converting to their religion. When we refused, naturally, they left only with an ignored warning that they would be back again someday. After that, we didn't hear anything about them until just a few months ago." I nodded. "Great, just great. if my guess is correct,

then we may very well be in for one heck of a battle here."

We continued to fly in silence after that until the village came in sight. then, we landed near Hiccup's house and I melted back to my usual half-form.

"Hawken! Thank goodness yer here!" Stoick yelled as he stepped out of his front door. "I was just headin' over to the Mead Hall, and we could probably use yer help and knowledge." "Yeah, I heard," I muttered. "Astrid explained part of the situation to me. Now, what do we need to do?" Stoick motioned us to follow him. "Let's get down te the Hall first. I'll explain there."

We followed him down the path and to the Mead Hall, and went in. I shut the door behind me, then looked around. So far, only Hiccup and Toothless were there, near the central fireplace, Toothless with his riding gear on him already.

"All right," Stoick said, placing his hands on the stone, "the first thing we need te do is have a meeting on our course of action. I've already got the heads of the council coming down in a few minutes." he looked at me. "Hawken, since ye already probably know at least a little bit about how these people work, since this would have been past history fer ye, ye'll need to help us decide what to do when they get here. As ye pointed out when we fought the Clubswingers, they may still be here for peaceful discussion, or te do battle." I shifted where I stood. "Well, if I'm right about what I heard, they're probably here to use force anyway. Second time's not as friendly with these people." Stoick nodded. "Well, tomorrow mornin' before they get te the docks, Hiccup, you and Hawken will go out there to find out just what path they're plannin' on takin'. Astrid, you will follow as backup if needed te get Hiccup off the ships." Astrid nodded. "You got it, Chief."

Stoick looked down at the fire ring, then at the main doors. "It's almost time fer the council meeting. Let's get things set up properly." We arranged some chairs around the ring, and took our seats, waiting for the other Vikings to show up. As we did, I took another look around the Great Hall. It still fascinates me how they managed to carve it out of just a simple cavern in the side of the mountain.

The rest of the council and a number of other villagers started pouring in, and we waited until everyone had found a seat or a place to lean. "Alright, let's get this over with," Stoick bellowed, and the whole hall went silent enough to hear a pin drop. "We all know why I called ye here," Stoick continued as he took his place at the head of the ring. Hiccup, Astrid and I sat nearby. "The Crusaders have returned in force, and we need te figure out why, as well as how to react. We have heard the stories the traders have offered about conditions further south, so I don't doubt they're here te use force." A large group of Vikings voice their agreement on that. Stoick cleared his throat. "Now, Astrid has brought Hawken here te help lay out exactly what might happen, so that we may be best prepared." he turned and motioned toward me, signaling that I should stand up and start speaking.

I leaned against the stone ring, pressing both my hands down and looking around. "I'll start with the best case scenario first," I said. "From what I know of my own past history and what Astrid has

told me, when Crusaders show up a second time they're going to try using force. I'll admit it isn't likely, but there is still the chance they are here on one of their so-called peaceful missions. If so, I would assume the best idea is to kindly explain to them that there will be no changing of the ways as of right now, unless by your own free will, and no joining of their empire." A number of people began to voice their disagreement with this idea, talking about what could go wrong, but I held up a hand to say I wasn't finished. They knew better than to get me impatient or irritated, so they quieted down. "Continuing on what I was saying, more than likely even with a thorough explanation, they're going to need some sort of show of power to convince them they won't win, and some sort of convincing that you are a good people, no matter what you believe. Hopefully they'll leave Berk alone after that.

"Now, I believe right now, a more likely situation is the worst case scenario, that they are here to use force and wage war, to get what they want," I continued darkly. "In that case, I can try to halt the fleet in order to give us some time to prepare for war. Even so, I would suggest everyone prepare anyway. If they attack straight off, we can use the catapults and dragons to destroy as many ships as possible, then carry out a plan I've started to come up with, and I'll get to in a minute. If they try to talk first, we may still have a chance to explain to them that we aren't going to back down, and hopefully try to ward them off, though if they've come this far I doubt we'll just get them to turn around and go home."

"What was the plan ye were talkin' about a minute ago?" Spitelout, Snotlout's father, asked. I cleared my throat and continued. "Try to get as many of the soldiers as possible into the Great Hall here. The best way to do that is to drop hints about valuables and important historical artifacts being stored somewhere in here. These people will seek to destroy such artifacts to try and weaken our defense, break us. I will then take care of anyone you manage to get in here. The rest of them, well, I'll leave that up to you, since you're more adept at open battle." I looked around, seeing the mix of faces bearing grim looks and anticipation. "Oh, and try to incapacitate those you fight, and whoever you don't kill, we can put them into the arena to deal with them. Dead warriors don't learn lessons, and we want to send them home with a big lesson to share with their kings."

"Ye mentioned earlier we may stand a chance of convincing them to just leave," Stoick said. "How would ye suggest goin' about that without any bloodshed?" I smiled slightly. "Supposedly I believe in the same god that they do," I said, "and I might stand a chance at using that common ground to get us off our backs. I have pretty good knowledge of their general beliefs and what they will use to back it up, and if they are anything at all like the Christian sects I have in my world today, I may be able to use their own evidence against them. Of course if that fails, even after the battle, I will leave them all to you. I have no interests in real torture or interrogation, so if I can't use their own beliefs to get them to leave Viking customs alone for at least a little while, then I will gladly step right out of the way."

Stoick nodded and looked around the room. "We have this one suggestion up for debate," he said, "and I say it sounds pretty well thought through. Does anyone else have any suggestions as to what plan of action we should take?" There was some discussion for a few

minutes, but eventually no one could seem to come up with anything to top mine, at least in terms of areas where we had room to adapt.

"Very well, are we in agreement to go forth with this decision?" Stoick asked. There was a near-unanimous "Aye!" as the council and other villagers voiced their approval, only a few nay-sayers in the back voicing dissent (not surprisingly the local grouch Mildew among them). Most of the village knew how powerful I could be when it came to necessity, as well as the fact that I could be just as argumentative, stubborn, or persuasive as any of them when given enough information to go off of.

After the meeting adjourned, it was hustle and bustle all over the place to get weapons sharpened and calibrated, properly weighted, or whatever else was needed, the houses fortified and all valuables stored away and hidden, and whatever else might be needed for war preparation. As all the Vikings prepared for the upcoming events, I gathered the village dragons together and explained to them what was likely to happen.

::All of you are going to be the main targets,:: I explained curtly. ::These people see dragons as evil creatures sent by the devil to plague man, though we all know how wrong that is. Anything that you can think of to use to protect yourself, any weak points at all, use to cover yourself somehow. If we battle and you get the chance, incapacitate the enemy in any way possible, though I would prefer they are not killed. Dead men do not learn. However, they will not hesitate to kill you, so remember: you before them.:: The dragons were set on edge, but they all agreed to the conditions set before them. Not like they had a choice really, plus they were all ticked by the thought that the Crusaders saw them as evil. And of course if there's one thing you don't want, it's a po'ed dragon after you.

By nightfall, the entire village was brimming with sharp objects and implements for battle and protection. Nearly every dragon had armor of some sort on even, and ammunition was everywhere for use as well. Berk's important sources of information and history were all stored away safely in a secret underground room far beneath Elder Gothi's house, which was in and of itself a good distance away from the rest of the village, and everything in the Mead Hall was removed if it had importance, or was redecorated to look like it may have hid something important.

Unfortunately even by nightfall, the first of the Crusader ships could be seen on the horizon, and with my enhanced vision I could clearly see the famous cross symbols adorning the sails. In order to keep them at bay for a little while longer, all lights in Berk were doused or hidden from ocean view, and the watch towers were darkened as well. It helped too that Berk was famous for cloudy weather, and that night was no exception, so no moon or stars shone to guide the way either. If the Crusaders came too close that night, the sea stacks and pillars surrounding the shores of the island would prevent any successful landing until morning.

"Alright, ye three sure ye now what ye have te do tomorrow mornin', right?" Stoick asked. Hiccup, Astrid, and I were in his house, with Toothless volunteering as a temporary backrest. "Right," we voiced unanimously. Hiccup was to ride Toothless down to the lead ship and determine whether the Crusaders were here peacefully or for war. I

would follow underwater and listen to what was happening on board. If something went wrong, I would be the distraction so that Hiccup and Toothless could get away and hook back up with Astrid and Thorn, the latter pair protecting the duo as they headed back to the village to report. Then, I would stall the fleet if needed in the same manner as I had the Clubswingers, and head back myself. In the few hours we would have afterward, we would set up the last few preparations and gather on the docks. from there, the plan I had laid out in the meeting earlier that afternoon would be enacted.

Stoick looked at me. "Ye sure yer able te sty over tonight?" I nodded. "I made a trip back home earlier to sort things out. Both my parents know where I am and what to possibly expect. They're not happy with the situation, but it's important enough." He nodded. "Very well. Astrid, ye best be gettin' home yerself. All three of you need yer sleep tonight." With that, he headed upstairs.

Astrid turned and gave Hiccup a kiss. "See you tomorrow," she said, smiling, then headed out the door and down the path to her own house. Hiccup helped me lay out a sleeping place in his room, and Toothless curled up around his bed and my mat, watching both of us and making sure nothing happened. "Overprotective reptile," I muttered, smirking. I laid down and looked up at the ceiling. "Lord, we're heading into a dangerous situation tomorrow," I whispered, "so I pray for your help. We're going to need it."

The three of us slowly fell into fitful slumber, anxiety of what was to come playing through our minds. We knew not what was about to unfold, nor just how life-changing some events would turn out to be.

## 29. Chapter 29: Deadly Intentions

\*\*A/N-I'm back, and so is the action! The biggest battle of the book begins now, and will continue for another couple chapters. We're almost at the end of this book too, only 7 chapters left before we move on! So read, enjoy, and please leave a note to tell me what you think!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 29</p>

Deadly Intentions

"Wake up! They're almost here!"

Hiccup, Toothless and I all jolted awake at the alarmingly loud wakeup call coming from the doorway. Standing there looking exasperated was Astrid, all suited up and ready to go already. Thank God Hiccup and I had slept in all our clothes that night.

"Why in the world are you up here?" I asked tiredly. "You could have just had Stoick come up and yell at us for you." Astrid simply looked over the axe in her hand in a mildly threatening manner, running her finger along the edge. "I believe some things need more of a woman's touch. This was one of them." I stood up and smirked, not able to resist a jest. "Well, in that case, leave the touching to between you and Hiccup, especially this early in the morning." I heard a snort of

laughter from over where Hiccup was putting on his prosthetic. At the same time, from Astrid's direction I heard something go whistling through the air toward my head. I reached up and caught Hiccup's shoe before it could brain me, and then just tossed it over to Hiccup. I looked over at Astrid, who had a serious blush crawling up her cheeks and anger written all over her face. "Tsk, tsk, Astrid, you aren't forgetting I'm half dragon, now, are you?" Astrid just leveled a venomous glare and the edge of her axe at me. "You're just lucky you happen to be a friend of mine. You three hurry up and get outside. The crusaders are only a couple of miles offshore."

After she left I groaned and looked over at Toothless. "Just how heavily do you sleep? Did you even hear her coming up the stairs?" Toothless just gave a draconic shrug. ::Didn't know it was her,: he said. I sighed. "Well you could have let the two of us know that someone was coming up the stairs." I looked over at Hiccup, who nodded agreement. "Useless reptile."

A few minutes later the three of us boys hooked up with Astrid and Thorn in front of the house. Hiccup mounted on Toothless and Astrid on Thorn, while I just sprouted a pair of wings, as I'd only be flying as far as the bay. From there, I would be swimming.

"Good luck! Try not to get beat up too badly!" Snotlout called out not-so-helpfully. "Try to come back in one piece," Stoick said afterward. We nodded and took off into the air. Once I was out over the bay, I folded my wings and morphed into my original sea dragon form and dropped neatly into the water. Above, the two dragons slowed a bit to make sure I could keep up, though they needn't have worried: an ocean-goer like me could swim nearly as fast as any dragon could fly. We kept pace for about a mile out, then as planned, Astrid and Thorn started lagging behind to wait as backup, while I moved ahead of Toothless and Hiccup, matching my color perfectly to the waves around me so as not to be seen by the ships.

As we approached, I kept only my ears above the water to make sure all attention was focused, for now, on Hiccup and his approach. Sure enough, as we neared within a couple thousand feet, I detected much yelling and commotion on the first and, as I had correctly guessed, leading command ship. I swam up alongside the ship, careful to stay unseen by the rest of the twenty-ship fleet, and I watched as Hiccup and Toothless slowly near, and as Toothless flared his wings to come in for a landing, I heard from on the deck, "Get out of the way! The demon is landing!" At that I quietly hissed, but stayed put as I listened to Toothless land on the deck.

"Hello to you visitors," I heard Hiccup announce. "I am Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, son of Chief Stoick the Vast, leader of the Hairy Hooligans tribe. State your business here by our shores."

"We've come to offer a hand of help to rid yourselves of these demonic beasts," I heard an authoritative voice say, "and offer your village protection by joining the lands of our king, under the name of God." I heard Toothless start growling at this, and I matched his sentiment. Someone was seriously misinformed. This was just as I had predicted: The Crusaders saw the dragons as evil demons, and were here to get rid of them, while taking over Berk by force. Hiccup spoke again, with just a hint of disgust and irritation in his voice. "The dragons are here to stay, and as far as I can imagine from being

these demons you speak of. They are friends of our village, and our allies. And I am sorry, but we must reject your offer, as we have no interest at all in joining the lands of another. We are happy as we are." I heard whispers of witchcraft and "deviltry," and the authoritative voice spoke again.

"My dear boy, it would seem clear that the beasts have brainwashed you, put you under some sort of spell to protect them. Step away from that black demon, and we can help you free yourself from this horrible curse." ::Black demon?! Does he even hear himself?:: I heard Toothless gripe. ::They don't even know what it is to be a follower of God, do they? They're labeling me as a devil's helper?!:: From that rant I surmised Toothless was more than a little ticked off. "Calm down, bud," Hiccup said. "I'll do no such thing," he replied to the authority, and I could hear more than just a little bit of anger in his voice now. "Toothless is my best friend, and I swear you will pay if you even dare to lay a finger on him. I will defend him with my life, as any of us would."

I hear swords being drawn, and guessed this was about to get ugly, fast. Once again, I heard the man I assumed was a commander of some sort belt out, "Alright then. Men, remove the boy safely from the beast, then kill it." Okay, that's it, I thought, it's past time to make myself known.

I exploded up out of the water, hoisting myself up along the side of the ship and grabbing onto the edge of the deck siding, towering 10 feet above the heads of the men on board. From my new vantage point I saw Hiccup still atop Toothless, who was baring his teeth at a heavily built, leather-and-armor clad man and about 20 armored soldiers behind him all with swords drawn and about ready to kill the dragon. As soon as I appeared, they all did a double-take and took a couple steps back. The leader gave an angered glare, with a hint of fear, at first Hiccup, then me. "What new devil's work is this?" He spat. I growled, then leaned down to look him straight in the eyes. "Touch either of them, and you'll find yourself on the receiving end of a world of hurt," I hissed.

A number of gasps went up as I spoke, and I heard someone whisper, "The devil speaks!" I whipped my head around and glared at the man. "I am no devil, and you will do well to remember to never call me that again!" I snapped. "And yes, I can speak," I continued, raising my head back up to look down at them all. "I can do far more than that, and if you continue on this path, if your intentions are to do harm to my friends the dragons and the Berkians, then it would be extremely wise of you to simply turn around and leave now, before you get hurt!" To emphasize my point, my eyes melted from the oceanic blue to a blazing ember's color, then back.

Even after this, though, there were still barks of laughter from the crew of soldiers, certainly not worried at all about this, it seems. "We've fought demons like you before," one remarked. "We aren't afraid of a talking beast." The commander nodded in agreement. "Kill the dragons and hold the boy," he ordered.

"NOW!" I yelled, whipping my head to face Hiccup and Toothless, and causing the soldiers to raise their weapons up at me first, anticipating an attack. It was enough of a distraction for Toothless to leap off the deck and rocket into the air, heading back to Berk. As Astrid pulled behind him as protection, I focused back on the

soldiers again. The commander was shaking in anger. "Fine," he spat, "we'll get rid of at least one demon."

He threw his sword up at me, the metal tip slicing through the air straight toward my neck with a speed and accuracy that would have ended with the sword piercing most dragon's throats.

I'm not most dragons, let's start with that. Already anticipating such a move, I had hardened my scales to a rock-like consistency, and the sword rammed into my throat with a loud clang, and bent nearly in half. As it fell, I caught it and held it up in my fist. As the soldiers looked on, the temperature of my hand began to drop, and ice crystals began growing around my hand and across the sword. Within seconds the sword had been frozen solid, and with a flex of my fingers, I shattered it, letting the shards of metal drop to the deck of the ship. I glanced down at the soldiers again, who had gone silent. "Leave now," I hissed, "or let the games really begin."

I back flipped into the water, showering the ship, and then aimed a stream of freezing breath at the base of the ship. The ice crackled and spread from ship to ship and I coated them all thoroughly. After they were all stuck in place with a foot-thick layer of ice, I raced through the water back to Berk.

Hiccup and Astrid had already made it back to shore, and were on the docks with the rest of the village when I got there. I burst out of the water and began melting back to my own form, resting my eyes on Stoick. "Well, it's official," I drawled, shaking off excess water and speed drying myself with heat. "We're gonna have a big fight on our hands today." Stoick nodded, then turned to look at the villagers and the dragons up on the cliffs. "Get the dragons who still need it in armor, and everyone prepare for battle. Grab your weapons!" he ordered, then began striding back up the path toward the village. Hiccup and Astrid followed me and the dragons up a different path to where we had stored Toothless and Thorn's armor, and began fitting the pieces on. As it had turned out, the Vikings had actually been at the idea for a couple of years, preparing armor for the dragons for cases like this. They had learned how to make relatively lightweight, yet very sturdy armor out of various metals and, curiously, the powdered shed scales of certain dragons, namely Gronckles and their relatives. Now they were fitting the last few pieces onto the dragons that had been missed the night before, and any dragons without riders that willingly donned the suits. For most of the dragons, the armor had been painted to match the color of the dragon wearing it, so their appearances change very little, aside from bulking them up slightly.

After about 2 hours, as expected, all the dragons and Vikings were in armor, with weapons at the ready, and many of us were gathered at the docks, waiting. The Crusaders were now finally free of my ice attack, some still bearing chunks along the flanks, and the whole fleet was within the sheltered bay. We could see both the leader of the soldiers that Hiccup and I had encountered, as well as this prominent but oddly dressed figure with thick flowing robes and a hood over his head. I assumed he was a "religious" man of some sort, like a bishop or priest, and that he was the missionary that had been to Berk before. As they neared the port, there were no immediate signs of outward aggression from them. The Vikings, on the other hand, were a different story.

"Stay your weapons, and stick to the plan!" Stoick ordered. If the Crusaders did not come and attack immediately, we were going to allow one ship to dock, and the leaders to speak with us. When the leading ship was close enough, Stoick bellowed, "One boat may approach and dock! The rest must stay back or we will attack immediately!"

Probably assuming in was the best way to have an advantage in overtaking Berk, the robed figure voiced agreement, and the ship docked alone. the rest stayed out in the harbor. Astrid, Hiccup, and I stood in front of the crowd with Stoick and Gobber, along with their respective dragons, and we watched guardedly as the robed man and the leather-clad soldier stepped off the plank and onto the dock.

"State your name and your intended business here," Stoick spoke in monotone. The robed man bowed slightly, then spoke. "My name is Attonius, priest of Mitlagard, the northern city within the former empire of Rome, and I am here under instructions from our King Levius." The commander of the soldiers stepped forward and introduced himself. "I am General Brutus, under orders of Attonius. We are here on a mission to cleanse this land of all demons and pagan ways which live here in abundance, and we offer a chance of protection and allegiance with our king by placing yourselves within the lands under his rule."

As Toothless and the other dragons began growling menacingly, I watched as Hiccup struggled to suppress an outburst of his own. I was slowly beginning to simmer myself again, so I understood his situation. "You are wasting your time here then," Stoick remarked. "There are no demons here, not for many miles at least, we have no interest in joining any land under the rule of another and are perfectly fine as the community we are, and whatever you may mean by 'pagan' I do not know."

I cleared my throat, making myself known. "What he means, Stoick," I began, glaring daggers at the commander, "is that their definition of 'pagan' is any religions or systems of belief not adhering to their own, and therefore are bad and must be cleansed from this earth." The priest gave me a questioning stare. "And who, might I ask, are you?" he asked, glancing over what were probably to him the very strange garments I was wearing. "Your voice sounds strangely familiar." I shrugged. "Who, and possibly more importantly what, I am are on a need to know basis right now, thank you," I said. "I will say this though: I am a person who may understand more about your system of beliefs and what may or may not be otherwise true than even you likely ever will." I stepped forward. "I know the God you say you follow, I know what is written in His book, and while the rest of the people you see standing here may not know what I'm talking about and believe something very different, I still strongly encourage you to take the advice of Stoick and I and leave. Learn that it is not by the hand of men that people change what they know, not by your choice that they convert but theirs, and learn that even though my beliefs run a similar line as parts of yours, there are things you are doing right now that goes against all of what our God say."

There was silence for a few moments as the priest stared at me, then he burst out laughing. "My, what a big mouth, and such courage coming from a young boy," he scoffed. "And you actually think you know anything about what we believe? You, who fraternizes with these

heathens?" I nodded. "You call yourselves Christians, and claim to follow the Word of God. I do follow His Word, and I have already seen you prepared to break it." I heard the dragons behind me voice their agreement, though of course only I was able to understand them. "Here's an example for you," I continued. "Do you know what the Ten Commandments are?"

Attonius chuckled for a moment. "Alright, so you do know more than I would have given you credit for, strange little boy." I bristled at the thought that I still looked little. I was 18 for good grief! "Yes, I do know what the Commandments are, and every person should know them. That is part of the reason why I'm here." I gave him a glare. "Then you know well that Commandment 6 states, 'Thou shalt not murder,' yes? If you use force to make others bend to your beliefs, you are likely to kill at least some of those souls, and that would be murder. They did not provoke an attack." I smiled. "And believe it or not, our friends the dragons also follow the same that I do, even if in their own way. To kill them just because you believe something you have never proven would be murder as well."

As I expected, both the priest and the commander burst out laughing at this. "The demons, following our God? Ha ha! Interesting story boy, but it's too outlandish to be true. It will not save those horrid abominations that you so wrongly wish to protect." On cue, every single dragon gave a venomous hiss at this proclamation. I gestured to the reaction. "You do realize they can hear every word you say, yes?" The priest gave me a fisheye. "And how would you know?" he asked suspiciously. "Can you talk to them?" I smirked. "If I could that has nothing to do with it. Without words they can still say exactly what they know and feel."

By this point, Stoick and the rest of the Vikings had had enough. "Alright, we've already told you lot, yer wastin' yer time here. We will not kill dragons, convert to your twisted system, or join you!" The rest of the Vikings loudly voiced their agreement with this in a series of loud cheers, and the dragons roared their approval as well, along with a warning of their own.

Attonius and Brutus looked at each other, and both bore dark, sinister expressions on their faces. "Very well then," the priest said darkly, "we will deal with this inconvenience in our own way now." Suddenly, he pulled out a hidden sword and pointed it directly at Stoick.

"Now!" he yelled, and all the ships came to life. men leapt from the sides of the docked ship as the rest in the harbor came into port. Following the plan, Stoick yelled, "To the village!" The dragons took off, their riders along with them if they had any, and began creating a temporary fire barrier while the villagers raced to position.

I raced up into the village and through it to the cliff side where the Great hall was located. My part was to be played out inside, but until I got there, I had to stay human. The surprise waited for any soldiers who came through its doors.

After I reached the Hall, I slipped in and closed the doors again, then walked to the very back of the hall, hiding behind the last pillar, and there, I waited. For the next few minutes, I was alone in the hall, with only the empty tables and bare walls for company. I listened as the shouts of men and the clash of metal on metal came

nearer and nearer to the hall, and looked around the room, checking to make sure the lengths of rope and chains I would need were in position. The army would never even know what hit them, let alone stand a chance at fighting back. The Vikings were doing their part, leading what sounded like a very large portion of the army to me. Finally, just outside the doors, I heard someone yell, "Don't let them inside! They can't be let through!"

There was a short scuffle, then after a few seconds I heard the doors slam open. I hid directly behind the pillar and out of sight, for now, and listened as what sounded like hundreds of soldiers pour into the hall and start ransacking everything. "We'll break them now!" I heard, and recognizing the voice, I smiled. The commander was in here. After a few more soldiers had poured into the hall, almost to the point of reaching me (though no one noticed the teen peeking his head around the side of the pillar every now and then) I heard Gobber outside yell, "Shut the doors!"

Just like that, I heard the massive wooden doors slam closed, and an outside lock mechanism slid in place, effectively trapping the soldiers in the hall with me. Peeking out at the group trapped in here with me, I couldn't help but smile again. There were probably a good 400 or 500 men in the hall, a good bulk of the army, along with Brutus, the commander.

"Augh!" Brutus yelled in frustration. "It was a trap! They locked us in!" He looked around the room, then pointed at the nearby tables. "Use those to break down the doors!" The nearest soldiers moved to do so, grabbing the tables and hoisting them up.

Before they could even start such a futile attempt (and futile it would have been as the doors were made of oak and over a foot thick), I finally stepped out into the open. "You're not going anywhere, anytime soon," I announced loudly, causing nearly every soldier there to jump.

"Let me through!" I heard Brutus hiss, then he managed to push his way through the crowd to where I was. He instantly caught sight of me, and narrowed his eyes in an angered grimace. "You!" he hissed. I smiled. "Yes, me. I do sincerely apologize for being such a party pooper, but I'm afraid none of you will be rejoining the fight outside again today." Brutus laughed. "And what do you think could possibly stop us, boy?" I casually played with my fingers for a moment before replying. "Well, first there's the doors behind you, which I will inform you are a foot thick and made of hard oak, which you will never manage to break through, at least not until the battle is over. Secondly," I said, drawing out the suspense, "you will have to contend with me while we're in here."

A roar of laughter echoed through the hall as the soldiers looked at the young adult threatening them. Okay, I'll admit it, as a human I don't look threatening at all. I'm nerdy looking, thin as a twig, and only average height. Plus, even at 18 I still looked like I was 16 or younger.

"You? What could possibly be scary about you?" Brutus jeered. "You couldn't even possibly take down one of us, you twig, especially as you don't even have a weapon on you!" this time I laughed. "Yes, that's true, I left my weapons at home today," I agreed. "But the thing is, I don't really need a weapon, I am one. And I could take on

ten of you at the same time and win." I looked around at the faces full of laughter around me, not believing a word I said. "Plus," I continued, "you won't even be able to see or even touch me, let alone land a blow on me."

Brutus guffawed again. "I see you perfectly well, twerp, you're hard to miss, save for the fact that you could hide behind fishing line. How do you figure I'm not going to be able to see you?" I spread my arms out wide and flexed my fingers. "This is how I figure that," I said darkly, and began the first of the changes, watching in enjoyment as the look of triumph on the commander's face melted as the Shadow black scales began to flow across my skin.

### 30. Chapter 30: A Different Point of View

\*\*A/N-The countdown begins, only 6 chapters left after this! The first of the well-deserved humiliations begin here.\*\*

\*\*As always, read and review!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 30</p>

#### A Different Point of View

As the Vikings ran back into the village, Brutus rallied his troops from the ships as they docked, jumping onto the deck again and starting up the path. He really had no idea why the Vikings had decided to head back into the village, as he knew most were an "attack first, ask questions later" kind of people. Nevertheless, he shrugged it off and belted out his instructions to the troops, then headed up and into the village.

About a third of the soldiers stayed on the ships to set up the siege weapons and attack as a backup wave, if needed. Another third spread through the village to destroy supplies and anything else that might weaken the Vikings later, should they actually manage to lose. However, all of that was made slightly more difficult with the dragons on the Vikings' side, so even halfway through the battle no one had managed to get to even the main storehouse (unbeknownst to them, though, the storehouse was emptied days before anyway, so it would have been a moot point).

At the same time, the final third of the army followed Brutus as he headed for what he naturally assumed held all their important artifacts, like in the many other Viking villages he had visited: the Great Hall. "This way!" He yelled, charging through the streets, only a few Vikings making a half-hearted attempt to slow him down. Had Brutus actually taken a moment to think about the processes of war, he would have at least formed an inkling of an idea that something was wrong with that picture; it shouldn't have been a straight shot to the Hall.

When he and his men reached the steps of the Great Hall, there was at least a few Vikings guarding the doors, ready to stop Brutus from getting through. "Remove them, but do not kill them, if you can," Brutus instructed his men. The soldiers fell upon the Vikings, sweeping them aside easily. "Don't let them inside!" one Viking

yelled. "They can't be let through!" It was useless though, as the group stationed at the doors were moved away and tied up. Brutus and his soldiers burst in through the doors and filled the Great Hall. "We'll break them now!" Brutus exclaimed gleefully, looking around as he searched for anything resembling a book or historical artifact.

Suddenly, behind him he heard someone yell, "Shut the doors!" and turned to see a very large, artificial-limbed Viking helping a new group of guards slam the doors shut. "No!" he yelled, and jumped for the handles. But he was too late, as the doors slammed in place, and he heard something lock outside.

"Augh!" he yelled in frustration, finally catching onto why so few people had tried to stop him. "It was a trap! They've locked us in!" Brutus turned to his men, then looked around the room. Spying a set of tables off to one side, he pointed to them. "Use those to break own the doors!" His men moved to pick up the tables, but didn't get far before a voice in the back of the hall froze everyone in their steps.

"You're not going anywhere, anytime soon," the voice said, echoing off the now silent walls of the hall. Brutus turned, but couldn't see anyone through the sea of soldiers blocking his way. He began muscling his way through, some of the soldiers parting the way for him, others too surprised to move.

"Let me through!" Brutus hissed, and shoved his way through the last line of soldiers, stumbling out into the open space near the back of the hall. There, standing in front of him and looking way too cocky for his situation, was the strange teen that Brutus remembered arguing with back on the docks. He narrowed his eyes, more irritated than shocked. "You!"

The teen smiled at the recognition and nodded. "Yes, me. I do sincerely apologize for being such a party pooper, but none of you will be rejoining the fight outside again today." Brutus couldn't help but laugh, being threatened by a teen, and a twiggy boy at that. "And what do you think could possibly stop us, boy?" he asked teasingly. The boy simply looked at his fingers as if bored for a moment, then replied. "Well, first there's the doors behind you, which I will inform you are a foot thick and made of hard oak, which you will never manage to break through, at least not until the battle is over. Secondly," the boy smirked, as if holding some hilarious secret, "you will have to contend with me while we're in here."

That was all that was needed. Brutus started laughing, and the rest of the soldiers surrounding him followed. "You?" he gasped, barely believing what he was hearing. This boy thought he was actually dangerous! "What could possibly be scary about you? You couldn't even possibly take down one of us, you twig, especially as you don't even have a weapon on you!" This time the boy laughed, and Brutus started getting irritated again. The twerp thought he still had an upper hand. "Yes, that's true, I left my weapons at home today," the boy replied, still not losing the mischievous smirk. "But the thing is, I don't really need a weapon, I am one. And I could take on ten of you at the same time and win. Plus," the boy continued, his eyes starting to gain a dangerous glimmer to them, and Brutus swore he was hallucinating a bit when he saw the boy's eyes shimmer a slight shade of red, "you won't even be able to see or even touch me, let alone

land a blow on me."

Brutus couldn't help it, and he laughed again. "I see you perfectly well, twerp, you're hard to miss, save for the fact that you could hide behind fishing line. How do you figure I'm not going to be able to see you?" The boy simply lifted his arms and splayed them out, stretching out his fingers as well. "This is how I figure that," the boy said darkly, and the fell silent.

Brutus lost the smile as he watched the teen's skin start to change color, melting to a shade as dark as anthracite, and cracking into thousands of individual scales. A pair of dark humps appeared behind the boy, gaining immense size but not revealing what they were, as the scales spread across the boy's clothes, up his neck, and down his legs. From his fingertips, thin, needle-sharp claws appeared, shining in the low light but still the same deep black, and from behind the boy, a long, whipping tail snaked out, ending in a pair of small, scythe-like tailfins. The humps behind the boy finally revealed themselves, flaring out into huge, bat-like wings the same color as the rest of him, and along the boy's back sharp ridges raised up. To match, a pair of long, sickle-shaped horns grew from the elongating head, and the boy's neck extended as he smiled, revealing glistening, razor sharp teeth. The last of the changes completed, with the eyes changing from muted greens and blues to a red as fiery as lava, and in place of the teen that once stood there, was a dragon as menacing as any the men had seen in nightmares.

"They say the power of God is something that should be feared, his wrath a powerful thing," the dragon spoke, causing gasps to ripple through the crowd; this was the same voice as the creature that had frozen their ships. "What happens when you invoke the wrath of even a servant given a gift from God?" The dragon smiled again. "Meet the Shadow Dragon," he said. "Not something you'll find naturally around here, but still not something you'd want to mess with, now is it?"

"W-what are you?" Brutus stammered. The dragon frowned. "I just told you what I am," he replied. "Yes, my true form is that of the teenage boy you saw a few moment ago, but as you can see I'm not exactly normal." Brutus drew his sword and aimed it at the former teen, whom he naturally saw now as some new evil creature. "What sort of pact with the devil have you made now?" he hissed. The dragon's blazing eyes narrowed, and he growled in return, stepping right up to the tip of the sword. "As I believe I already explained," the dragon/teen hissed, "I follow the same God you supposedly do, so how could you possibly assume I'd deal with a being so lowly and evil as Satan?" He raised up on his hind legs and flared his wings out again, causing the soldiers to back up in fear.

"Now you'd better listen up, and listen well, all of you," the dragon yelled, causing even Brutus to cringe a little. "You will either believe all that I say, take all of your men here, and leave and never return to these shores again," the dragon explained, "or, you will be forced to face me in here, and while I truly do not like the thought of killing people at all—" at this there was a quiet sigh of relief "-I will admit that I have no qualms about using some pain to get my point across, and I don't mind humiliation, either. Past that, I will always leave you to my friends the Vikings to be dealt with." The dragon/teen swung his head to look across the crowd.

"I was given this ability by another servant of God, a messenger or guardian of sorts, if you will, to help and protect those who at least try to do good. Anyone who attempts to hurt those who I deem my friends will face the consequences that I will give them. I already told you the dragons have their own set of beliefs, while not quite like mine very similar, and though the Vikings do not, those I have met so far here are inherently good people." The dragon swung his head back toward Brutus, who still had his sword in his hands and at the ready, but he had lowered it for a moment when the dragon started his little speech and stepped up out of range. "Now, I give you a choice," the dragon said to him. "Leave now, with your men and never return, or you can try to face me."

There was a moment of silence, then Brutus yelled out a battle cry, and swung his sword upward, the sharp tip of the blade aiming right at the dragon's long neck. The dragon didn't even attempt to move as the blade sliced cleanly through.

Nothing happened. The dragon merely frowned for a moment, as his head stayed firmly attached, and not even a drop of blood could be heard or seen hitting the stone floor below. Brutus lowered his sword and stared, dumbfounded. The dragon shook his head and smiled sadly, before truly grinning, his hundreds of sharp teeth glinting in the firelight. "It was so sad that I expected you to do something like that," the dragon said, but suddenly, at the same time Brutus noticed the creature's body beginning to blur as if he was watching the dragon through watery eyes. "One thing you forgot to think about," the dragon continued to speak, and now Brutus was certain he was watching the creature beginning to dissolve into smoke, "is: why is this form called a Shadow Dragon?" The dragon grinned even wider as his head began to blur and dissolve as well. "And ask yourself this: how do you kill a Shadow?"

Immediately, the entire dragon dissolved completely, a cloud of black smoke hanging in the air in front of Brutus, with only a pair of glowing red eyes still clearly delineated. Then, the entire cloud seemed to seep straight into the shadows cast by the pillar nearby, with the eyes the last thing to disappear.

Brutus looked around, silence ensuing, now seriously worried. But as time continued to pass, he began to calm down as nothing happened. If that really was some sort of demon, he thought, maybe that is how demons die. With a sigh of relief, he turned back to his men, who had also started to calm down. "I believe he's truly gone," Brutus said. "Now, let's get back to trying to break down those..."

His words died on his tongue as amused-yet-menacing laughter began to echo around the hall, originating from nowhere in particular. "Did you not listen to anything I said?" the teen's voice followed, seeming to emanate from everywhere at once. "You can't kill a Shadow Dragon!"

Suddenly, a shot burst out from the shadows dancing on the ceiling and exploded in the central fire pit, which then began to burn in black flames, sucking what little light was left out of the hall. A yelp of terror echoed through a few of the soldiers, and even Brutus was beginning to shake in fear as well.

"As I said before, they say you should fear the wrath of God," the

teen dragon's voice echoed again. "Well, I was given this gift by God, so even if no one can match Him, I can still bestow wrath to those who do wrong. And you have done much wrong in my eyes." All the men began backing away, toward the doors, the flickering shadows cast by the black fire around the room making them trip over unseen obstacles. An amused chuckle echoed now. "I see," the voice returned. "Now you want to leave. At least you've all finally got it through your head that I should be feared. Don't worry, I'm not going to kill any of you." A sigh of relief swept through the soldiers. "However, it should be noted that none of you will be left conscious by the time I leave this hall." The scrambling for the doors commenced again with renewed fervor, as the men began to see the shadows moving against the flickers of the fire, all around them. Their minds were not playing tricks either.

All around the hall, on the ceiling, walls, furniture, even on the men themselves, the shadows began to swirl and coalesce, twisting, growing, and extending out of themselves and lengthening to become blacker-than-black, writhing inky ropes with a mind of their own. One by one they began wrapping around soldiers, lifting them up in the air through a force not even their controller understood at the time, and waving them around where all left on the ground could see. They were smashed together, heads, helmets, and bodies crashing into each other and rendering the men unconscious. As the soldiers below continued to watch, the shadow ropes tightened around the now senseless men and flattened them against pillars and walls, tying them tight as the hidden chains and ropes were dragged up to make more permanent replacements. Then, the shadow ropes would drop away, and more men were lifted to their fates, sometimes ten or twenty at a time dispatched all at once.

Systematically, the soldiers were rendered helpless, unconscious and their weapons removed and hidden by the living shadows, and tied up along pillar, rafters, or hooks on the walls, until there was only one man left awake to see their fate: Brutus.

Brutus drew his sword again, though he wasn't sure exactly what he would do with it, ad as he did so, the voice of the teen echoed in laughter and amusement throughout the hall. "Come out from the shadows and show yourself, demon!" Brutus yelled. A venomous hiss melted around him, sending shivers down his spine, slithering from the shadows, and directly in front of the commander general, accumulating straight out of the impossibly black fire as well as the shadows all around it, the inky black ropes began to coalesce again, rising up and swirling in a slow motion tornado, spinning upward to a point, where they began to solidify again into the shape Brutus now recognized well: the sharp, ridge-lined snout of the nightmarish dragon the teen had become in order to incapacitate his entire crew.

The eyes appeared again, blinking bright in the darkness and glowing in anger, as the rest of the body and wings swirled into shape. "I thought I had already made it perfectly, without a doubt, CRYSTAL clear," growled the teen, "that I am as far as you could possibly get from being a demon without being one of God's ANGELS!" he yelled as the last of his tail solidified, swishing back and forth in rage, and he stepped toward the commander again. "I don't believe you," Brutus voiced back. the dragon narrowed his eyes. "Yes, you made that crystal clear as well when you tried to slit my throat," the dragon drawled. "You'll get a much longer explanation after I help the

village finish this pointless battle, but I'll say it again: you are the ones in the wrong, I know your God, I follow his rules to the best of my ability, and you have proven plenty well that you do not truly do so."

Done with talking, the dragon whipped his tail forward, wrapping it around the sword as if it were nothing more than a smooth staff, as the scythe-like tailfins cut into Brutus' wrists. Brutus yelped in pain from the lacerations and the force with which the sword was yanked out of his hands. The dragon looked the blade over, shrugged, and tossed it into the flames, where it began to melt.

Brutus looked back at the dragon, and saw the dragon's tail whipping back toward him at a speed no man could hope to avoid. It struck Brutus against the side of the head, and he did not see anything else for a good long while.

Once the Shadow was finished tying Brutus to the rafters in a very special place (namely directly over the fire pit), he flew over to the doors of the Great Hall, and dissolved back into the shadows, materializing through on the other side, and morphing for only a moment back to human. On purpose, he did not unlock the doors, for on the highly unlikely chance that one of the men inside were to awaken and somehow get loose, there was still no way they would be able to escape the hall. In the meantime, their weapons were all also safely stored away in a place only the Vikings knew about.

Once outside, the teen saw very few people left still near the hall. Everyone was out fighting in the village or over the ships and near the bay he could see rocks being flung through the air and catching a few unlucky dragons. Worried about where everyone was at this point, he remorphed into a massive version of the typical Night Fury, twice the normal size, and lifted off. When he reached the main battle, there was still a great deal of headway to be made. So far, the Vikings were winning, but as the teen would soon find out, there would be some major casualties before the battle came to a close. Much was still to be done, and little time was to be had to do it.

### 31. Chapter 31: Aftershocks

\*\*A/N-Back again! This is probably the biggest chapter in the book, importance wise. Only 5 left after here, and while there's still a little action left, it's about time to start winding down before the next book! And from here, begin the acts that will reverberate through the entire rest of the series.\*\*

\*\*As always, read and review!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 31</p>

Aftershocks

As soon as I was finished with Brutus and his motley crew of hard-headed soldiers, I left the Great Hall through a handy shadowy exit, and once outside, reformed into a double-sized Night Fury. Lifting off the ground and taking to the air, I could already see

where the battle was going: the Vikings had already managed to push the remaining half of the land army to the edges of the cliffs surrounding the harbor and onto their ships again. Unfortunately, the boats were well armed, with massive javelin launchers and trebuchets flinging boulders the size of a Nightmare's head into the village and cliffs. The dragons seemed to be doing well, especially as the armor that the Vikings had created took a whole lot to puncture.

However, looking around, I did see casualties here and there. Nobody I really knew, and most of them were only injured, though that meant they were down and out for now, and at least one or two dragons had been hit by arrows or javelins that had managed to find the chinks between the armor. To my grim satisfaction, there were many more Crusaders lying on the ground, not all of them just injured either.

I dove into the fray, diving and twisting between the separate fights, knocking groups of enemy soldiers to the ground with small blasts of indigo fire, and taking out the ship-bound machines systematically. After a short while, I managed to spot Hiccup and Toothless, themselves using the Night Fury's famous dive-bomb to remove weapons both on the ships and in the hands of soldiers. I flew toward them.

"Hiccup!" I yelled, catching his attention. He turned and, seeing me, waved over to an empty airspace so we could talk for a moment. Once we got there, I grinned. "I have a bit of a plan," I said. "Not too much different from what we were doing, but it has to be done faster. We need to take out the javelin launchers first, since they have a better chance at skewering an air attack, and we're some of the few who are fast enough to avoid them, and once they're gone, the dragons are pretty much safe." Hiccup looked at the ships. "What about the trebuchets though?" he asked. I shook my head. "Right now, they're less dangerous. They don't move as fast, and so far I've seen them mostly hitting the side of the cliff. Plus, for the dragons at least, broken bones are easier to heal than a spear wound in the wrong place." Hiccup nodded, looked down at Toothless, and they turned toward the ships again. They took the ones on the left side, I took the ones on the right.

Keeping my shots carefully controlled, I aimed for the launchers, blasting them one after another and watching the explosions rip the machines apart, vaporizing in an inferno of indigo and orange. Ship after ship was disabled and after about 10 minutes, we had managed to take out every single launcher on the ships. We were now at the entrance of the harbor, past the ships, and I signaled Hiccup with a quick barrel roll in the air, pointing my right wing down at a trebuchet and telling him it was time to take those out. He nodded and bent down to say something to Toothless, and they shot upward for a second, only to spin around at high speed and aim for the nearest catapult, the signature Night Fury scream echoing throughout the harbor. I followed their example, rocketing upwards to gain height, then flipped over and screamed downward, gathering another fireball in my throat, and as the ship neared and the men on it fled, I fired. Nothing but splinters was left.

We had started out in the back of the fleet this time, working our way to the front. The trebuchets met the same fate as the javelin launchers, and as we neared the front of the fleet, back by Berk, it seemed like everything was working out okay. I was wrong.

As we reached about the third ship from the island, we flew up to gain air again, and dove, taking out more trebuchets. I swept past my target and began to circle to gain height again, when I noticed someone moving much more calmly than the rest on the lead ship. I banked to see who it was, and froze for a split second. That was my mistake. The person was the priest Attonius, and while we had been busy with the ships in the back, he had prepared a new sort of weapon, one not so easily removed with high-powered fireballs: he was holding a massive handheld crossbow, and was aiming it not at me, but at Hiccup and Toothless, who were still busy gaining height to take out another trebuchet. They didn't know, and they didn't have time to move.

I dove down toward Attonius, screaming out "TOOTHLESS! LOOK OUT!" Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Toothless look over at me, then where I was heading, but by then, it was too late. I was still well over 500 feet up when the priest fired, the two-foot, broom-thick arrow screaming through the air. I flared and watched, helpless, as it found its intended target. Between the armor plates protecting Toothless' neck and chest, the arrow pierced, the shot of an expert marksman. Toothless let out a scream of agony, but the arrow didn't stop with him. It kept moving, spearing up through his side and through Hiccup's one good leg, pinning both of them together. Both screamed in pain, and lost control of their flight. The momentum of their height and angle caused them to turn toward the island, spinning out of control before they hit the water, skidding across the surface and plowing up across the one small beach in the area, sending up a massive spray of rocks and water onto the docks before they stopped moving. They didn't move after that.

"NNNNN00000000!" I screamed in rage and agony, feeling as if I was ripping in two. Two of my best friends had possibly just gotten killed, and their murderer was below me. My own rational thinking and reasons for withholding my own power evaporated, and, hanging still a couple of hundred feet above the ship Attonius was standing triumphantly on, I flared my wings again, felt the fireball rising in my throat, and fired down at the center of the ship.

The huge fireball found its target, detonating on impact and ripping through the deck of the ship, blowing out the sides and exploding within, causing the entire structure to explode outward in a whirlwind of flames and shockwaves. I watched for only a moment, not caring anymore as the men on the ship, priest included, were thrown hundreds of feet to splash down into the frigid waters as their ship was ripped in two. Within second the remains of the ship as at the bottom of the bay.

Still lost within a cloud of rage and immense pain, my mind blanked out for a while as I went on a bit of a rampage. Later on Stoick informed me I ended up destroying about half of the ships in the harbor and severely damaged several others before I finally began to calm down. As I did, and my mind cleared, I immediately raced over to the beach where Hiccup and Toothless had crash-landed. They were losing a lot of blood, but I could see them still breathing raggedly. I sighed in a small bout of relief, as there was still a chance they could survive, and raced to find Stoick. Across the docks and up on the cliffs and pathways, mostly as a result of seeing what I had done in my blind anger, I saw soldiers raising their hands and dropping their weapons in surrender. We had won, but for a moment I didn't

care at all about that. I raced over the docks and finally found Stoick, who was giving orders to take the soldiers who were still alive and restrain them in the Mead Hall for the moment being. He saw me land and turn human for a moment, and smiled. "Great job Hawken!" he congratulated, "Yer plan worked perfectly! We won after..." his voice trailed off when he finally recognized the look on my face. His tone grew dangerously serious. "What happened?" he asked carefully. "Hiccup and Toothless were shot down!" I nearly yelled in despair. In response I heard gasps ripple through the crowd around us, and Stoick tensed visibly, his face turning into a mix of shock and horror. "Where is he?" he asked sternly. "Where is my son?!" I turned and started to run toward the beach again. "Hurry, he's over here! I don't think they've got much time left!" I ran across the dock as fast as I could, ignoring the ramp that led to the small beach and instead jumped clear of the whole thing, landing hard in the pebbles and sand and racing again to the pair, soon followed by Stoick, Gobber, and the teens, all trailing basically the rest of the village behind them. Up above I heard shouts of "Hiccup!" and "What happened?!" as everyone noticed where I was heading and followed.

There, laying on the beach crumpled and ragged, was the beloved pair, Hiccup moaning and trembling in agony and Toothless grimacing from the same pain, but trying not to cry out so as to keep Hiccup calmer. I was glad to see they were still hanging on, but the amount of blood running across the sand and into the bay, and still pouring from their wounds where the arrow had pierced through told me that if something wasn't done immediately, they wouldn't be here for very long.

"Hiccup!" Stoick and Astrid yelled at the same time running up next to me. Hiccup turned and opened his eyes just barely, then gave a bone-chilling scream of agony after he did so. I ran forward, kneeling down next to them, and saw a number of joints where there weren't meant to be any; the number of broken bones from the crash was staggering. I looked Toothless in the eyes, and placed my hand gently on his head. ::Please,:: he whispered, barely able to keep the eye contact, ::kill us now. We won't survive these wounds anyway. Spare us the pain.:: I sat there, shocked, not believing what I was hearing from him.

Shaking my head, I stood up with determination and looked toward the Vikings behind me, healers finally reaching us and running forward. "No," I said quietly, and looked back at Toothless. "I am not going to let you two die!" I moved away from the healers as they knelt down and began to try dressing the wound. I looked closely at the arrow, and thought about what I had learned about medical problems in my own world. I turned to Stoick. "The arrow needs to come out, and something needs to be put in place to stop the bleeding!" I said. He nodded and directed the healers to start with that, as I found the teens and told them to help me hold Hiccup and Toothless still, as the removal of the arrow was going to be even more agonizing than it already was. I turned to the one teen who wasn't helping just yet, Fishlegs, and told him to go to my house and ask my mother for medical supplies. He nodded and headed off immediately with Horrorcow.

I was right about the arrow removal being horrible. As soon as Stoick cut off the base of the arrow in order to make removal as little of a hassle as possible, Hiccup began screaming and struggling, and the

worst was yet to come. Astrid and Snotlout grabbed hold of Hiccup, keeping him as still as possible, while the twins and a couple of other Vikings held down Toothless' head and legs, and a couple more got in place holding down the powerful tail. Good thing too, for as Stoick began slowly pulling out the arrow, and the healers put in cloths to clog the hole behind it, Toothless let out a glass-shattering shriek and began thrashing around, the weight of all of us barely holding him in place.

It took five full minutes to remove the arrow safely, and luckily by then Fishlegs had returned with the first-aid kit I was hoping for. However, even with the cloths in thick bundles and plugging the wounds on both sides, the pair was both still losing blood, and the kit wouldn't do me any good if that wasn't stopped. Already Hiccup was starting to look pale. Stoick turned to me, complete defeat and agony written across his face as well. "Even with everything in place, they're nae goin' te last long," he said quietly, and turned to look back at his son. Gobber placed his good arm around Stoick's shoulder, trying to give comfort where none could be given.

I stood there, staring at the pair, racking my brain to try and figure out a solution as my eyes jumped from Hiccup to Toothless and back again. To take them to my world for surgeons to patch up would not only take too long and basically destroy the peace we had managed to gain hold of again, but it would be too expensive for us and I doubt anyone in my world knew how to operate on a Night Fury. Tears began to well up in my eyes as I pulled my gaze away from the pair and looked at Astrid, who met my gaze and mirrored my look, tears already running down the face of the usually stone-strong warrior and dripped onto the grayish-white pebbles of the beach. To add to the downcast mood, clouds began to cover the weak sun and a slight wind picked up, threatening hypothermia on top of all else we were dealing with.

Wind...white...

Suddenly, a flash of memories hit me: first the day of the races in the Viking gathering fest the year before. That day I had first changed into the Shadow Dragon, a species that was completely made up and with a power that shouldn't exist. I could turn into dragons that didn't actually live in this world, and therefore wield at least some of their strengths. Another flashback hit me then, a story I had read once, with a dragon in it that actually did have a chance at saving Hiccup and Toothless from the brink of death.

"Move out of the way!" I yelled, pushing back to the front of the crowd and standing by the pair, I looked around at the people crowding us. "And give me some room while you're at it!" "What is it?" Gobber asked, curiosity piqued. I smiled, already beginning the changes. "I know of a dragon that may be able to help here," I said. "But that's a fatal wound," Astrid cried. "It would take a miracle to heal that!"

By then I was already standing on all fours, covered in snow-white scales, with a long tail reminiscent of Toothless' and massive wings also matching his own. As I finished the last changes and details in a hurry, I essentially looked like a snow-white Night Fury with horns on my head instead of ears. "I remembered when I first turned into the Shadow Dragon," I said. "It's a dragon that doesn't actually exist, and came from a story I had read. This one is also from

another story, made up, but it still seems to have worked." I looked at Astrid and Stoick, who had come closer again. "If I'm right, the Wind Fury is supposed to have a fire that heals instead of burns. I don't know if it will work, but it's our only shot." The two nodded, and shooed the other villagers away from the scene, save for the healers, who weren't convinced yet. I looked at them, and gestured for them to move away. "Everyone needs to move away in case something goes wrong," I said. They were still reluctant to move, but another glare from me and a slight snarl had them getting out of the way plenty fast.

I padded up to Hiccup and Toothless, who both looked up at me. "I don't know how well this will work," I said quietly, "or whether or not this will hurt, but it may be your only chance. Are you ready?" Hiccup, who was amazingly still conscious, gave an agonized glance at me. "It can't hurt any more than this," he strained. "Just get it over with!" I nodded, and began to focus on the task of breathing fire, concentrating as I found the right mental path to the action. *Lord, I beg of you, please let this work,* I prayed silently, then I opened my mouth and let out my breath.

Nothing happened. At all. "No," I whispered, "this has to work!" I focused harder, concentrating as hard as I could, channeling as much energy as I thought I could toward the blast, but still nothing happened. "Come on," I hissed, despair starting to creep into my mind. "Hawken, I don't think it's working," I heard Astrid say. "Maybe there's another way, but we need to think—" "We don't have the time to think!" I snapped, whirling toward her. "This is the only chance we've got!" I focused back on the pair, and drew every ounce of energy that I had, every bit of strength in me, every breath I had, into the effort of making the fire that I needed so desperately, and tried to fire again.

I nearly lost my concentration when a stream of glowing, almost mist-like flames shot out of my mouth and hit Hiccup and Toothless straight on. It had worked! Finally! As the flames hit, they spread out like a fog across the pair, spreading out to the sides and seeping into their wounds and flowing around them, until both Hiccup, Toothless, and a good deal of the beach were nearly hidden from sight under the drifting, glowing white "fire." I finally stopped breathing out, and simply watched for any signs of the miracle I had prayed for.

The results were instantaneous! A relieved smile grew across my face as I watched the edges of the arrow wounds begin to close in, and the blood stopped seeping out. Slowly they closed completely, sealing with barely even scars to reveal they were there. The healing power didn't stop there, though, as scrapes and cuts sealed up, and the broken bones reset themselves, and an audible grinding could be heard as they strengthened good as new! Life began to seep back into the pair, color returning to Hiccup's skin and the shine of Toothless' scales redeeming itself. But even then, that wasn't all I had done, as without even realizing it, the fire I had used had enacted another pair of miracles.

SPROING! CRACK! SNAP!

Everyone jumped in surprise as loud cracks and snapping springs were heard, and we all looked toward first Hiccup's prosthetic leg, then Toothless' missing tailfin. Hiccup's fake leg had split in two from

the force applied to it, and as it fell to the ground, from Hiccup's stump, the rest of his leg was regrowing. At the same time, the tailfin on Toothless had suffered a similar uprooting, as the black fin that had originally been there reappeared, stretching out slowly as bones elongated and the leathery skin stretched again between them, until it was good as new.

I stood there, speechless, as the Vikings behind me began to point and whisper, then cheer, as they watched these unintended miracles go to work. Hiccup, finally strong enough again to start thinking about what was going on around him, followed the fingers down to his leg. He yelped in surprise, and promptly fell off Toothless. "My-my leg..." he fumbled for words. "I don't... it's back! And Toothless! Your tail!" Toothless turned to look, and had about the same reaction as Hiccup, nearly squishing the boy in the process. "Hey, hey, watch it!" Hiccup protested. "I'm down here!" ::Sorry,::: Toothless apologized, though it went unheard, but not misunderstood, as Hiccup grinned, and hugged his friend as best he could. They looked over at me, words failing them again.

I heard steps behind me, and turned my head to see Stoick running up to Hiccup, grabbing him into a bear hug. "My son is back!" he exclaimed, laughing and hugging him some more. Hiccup tried to extract himself. "URK! Dad... can't breathe..." he gasped. Stoick looked down, then set Hiccup down again in apology, only to watch him fall over again as he failed to balance on the "new" leg. Stoick instead looked to me, and I was taken aback again as I saw tears going down Stoick's face. "What?" I exclaimed in mock surprise. "Stoick, you're actually crying?" He laughed and nodded. "We can't always live up to our names, can we?" he joked. The his face went somber again. "Ye save my son from death, again," he said, then gestured to the captive Crusaders also behind us on the decks, who were just as wide eyed as the rest of us. "I think ye also changed a few minds here too. I don't think I can ever repay ye enough, after all ye've done for us." I smiled and shook my head, ignoring a sudden bout of lightheadedness. "None needed," I replied. "I saved a friend, and I've had plenty of good times with all of you. There's no payment of any form necessary." I turned to face Hiccup and Toothless again, who were swarmed by the villagers and the teens now, Astrid and Hiccup both crying into each other's shoulders from relief. I smiled, glad things had finally worked out after such a horrible day as what we had just gone through. I nodded in satisfaction and turned to look back at the Crusaders. "Now, let's focus on dealing with our little..."

As I took the first steps back toward the docks, my adrenaline-charged system began to truly calm down, and as it did so, I felt myself begin to fall apart. I felt the ground beneath me quake, and the world began to swim and grow dimmer and dimmer, and I didn't even notice myself falling. As my vision blacked out, I realized I had made another mistake of sorts. In the story I had read, Wind Furies required years in order to save up enough of their healing breath to use even once, likely, I now realized, because of the taxing physical requirements of producing such a power, especially on a whim like I had just done. As this last thought passed through my head, I passed out, splayed unceremoniously on the beach.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup and Toothless completely forgot their good-as-new, healed states as they watched their friend fall hard to the ground. "Hawken!" Hiccup yelled, jumping up and stumbling over to the white dragon, not caring at all that once again he was completely unused to his foot, and shoeless to boot (no pun intended). He staggered and hopped across sharp rock shards to the dragon, tipping and falling halfway there, but Toothless managed to jump forward and catch him in time. "Thanks, bud," Hiccup said, and they both limped over to their friend. Hiccup dropped to the ground next to the dragon and put his ear carefully up to his side. Hearing faint breathing, he let out a sigh of relief and slumped to the ground, looking up at his father. "He's still alive!" Hiccup exclaimed, causing Stoick, Gobber, and a number of other Vikings to rush forward.</p>

"Get him up to my house, immediately," Stoick ordered, pointing at the gaggle of villagers. "Lay him on the mat inside, and get Sigrid to look him over. I'll be there in a few minutes." The villagers nodded in agreement, and carefully, they picked up the white dragon, and slowly carried him up the path toward the village. Though Hawken was still a bit smaller than Toothless at the moment, he was still nearly the same shape and a few hundred pounds, therefore making it a slight problem to move quickly. Stoick watched them make their way up the cliff side for a little bit, then turned his attention to Gobber.

"Take the prisoners here to the Kill Ring, and hold them in the cages for now," he ordered. "And of course make sure that they don't have any weapons on them." "Got it Stoick," Gobber said, turning to deal with the task. Stoick started to turn away, and then remembered another detail. "Oh, and Gobber?" The blacksmith turned back again. "Make sure after ye do that ye go an' deal with the soldiers Hawken left in the Great Hall. Put them in the same place." Gobber smirked for a minute, recalling what he had heard inside the hall before he had left earlier, and turned away again, giving Stoick just enough time for one more sentence: "Meet me at my house after yer done, so we can start figuring out what to do."

After the men had all left, Stoick turned to the teens, who were still standing nearby. Astrid had her arms around Hiccup, and the two were engaged in a kiss. "Ahem," Stoick said, catching their attention. The two lovebirds broke apart and blushed, rubbing the back of their heads. "Hiccup, you and Toothless stay here for a moment," Stoick said. "The rest of you, go to Hawken's house and tell his family what has transpired. I know his mother is going to be very worried, but currently Hawken's not going to be able to go back to his own house." He paused for a moment, and looked over the group of teens, specifically Snotlout and the twins. "Better yet, Astrid and Fishlegs, you go, and the rest of you go and keep an eye out on our friend." They nodded, and the group left, leaving Hiccup and Toothless alone with the chief.

Stoick turned to his son, and wrung his hands for a moment. "So," he started, "how do ye feel?" Hiccup smirked and looked himself over. "Eh, well, considering how all this started, pretty okay. A few scrapes from the rocks, but whatever Hawken did worked perfectly." Stoick nodded. "So I take it Toothless won't be needin' a tailfin anymore?" Hiccup looked at his reptilian friend, and a face of slight anxiety made itself known, before he smiled and nodded. "Looks like it. We won't need to worry about spare parts for my own leg either." Stoick nodded and smiled. There was silence for a moment, and Hiccup

started to fidget. "Uh, anything else?" he asked. Stoick shook his head. "It's just good to have you back and safe, my son," he answered. Hiccup nodded, looked over at Toothless, then back at his father. "Do you think Hawken will be okay?" he asked. "Whatever he did, it looked like it literally took everything out of him." Stoick stood for a minute, then nodded slightly. "That boy's surprised us more times than I can count," he said, "and you recovered from much worse, so I have little doubt he'll be back to himself in no time. But until then, we will just have to wait and see."

After checking over the pair, Stoick headed up to his house, and Hiccup had to ride Toothless up the path behind him. Since naturally they were both used to prosthetics, Hiccup no longer could walk easy, and Toothless couldn't fly, so for now, they were stuck on the ground and in the saddle, so to speak. Hiccup doubted he would even be able to walk around his house okay, but knowing Toothless' habit of jumping up the stairs and around the rafters, he decided he'd manage as best as he could. The biggest problem for now would be finding all those left socks and shoes again...

In the meantime, the pair along with Stoick had decided that somehow, they were going to pay Hawken back, no matter what he said. Too much had transpired for them to just sit back and feel indebted, but so far, nobody had any idea as for what to do. Fishlegs and Astrid returned soon with Hawken's mother in tow, as Stoick was right when he said she would be very worried, but as everything seemed to be stable, she agreed that being left in one place would be best for the boy, only insisting that she be kept updated if anything at all changed.

For the moment, things were finally calm again, and while Stoick stuck to dealing with the prisoners, Hiccup and the teens stuck to caring for their unconscious friend and making sure nothing at all went wrong. The battle was over, but nevertheless, their hands were still plenty full.

### 32. Chapter 32: Awakening

\*\*A/N-So, what did you think of the last chapter? I know there's not a whole lot of angst in this particular book, but hopefully that helped. Things are going to (mostly) wind down from here, but the countdown's still on: 4 chapters left after this one!\*\*

\*\*As always, please let me know what you think! Though I ask I don't just get a copy-paste response of something I've already been given, no need for half the reviews to look exactly the same...\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 32</p>

Awakening

"Ooohhhh!"

I groaned, turning my head but feeling unable to even open my eyes. I let out a sigh of resignation, still too tired to get up. When it came out more like a huff than a typical human sigh, I realized I must have been still in some dragon form. Forcing myself to open one

eye, I saw I was on a large mat inside Hiccup's house, and looking down my snout, I saw bright, gleaming snow white scales and a Fury-like form.

Suddenly, all of the memories of the battle with the Christian invaders came flooding back all at once, slamming into me like a sledgehammer: the Mead Hall, Hiccup and Toothless, the miraculous healing process I had enacted...

I jumped up, the exhaustion fading away and leaving me no longer tired at all, at the memory of why I was still in Wind Fury form. Changing into my more typical winged humanoid form (if you can call that typical), I stood up fully. "Whoa!" I cried, stumbling immediately after. The fatigue apparently wasn't quite done with me yet, and I nearly blacked out again.

Moving slowly, I found a nearby column and leaned up against it, waiting for the swirling black in my vision to fade away. Taking a couple deep breaths, I then slowly moved toward the door, opening it and taking a look outside. It was cloudy, unsurprisingly, but I saw all the Vikings going about their usual business, all signs of the battle already gone. Either they still knew how to rebuild extremely quickly, or I hadn't just been out for a night, and I was betting on the latter. Turning to look down the pathway leading away from the house, I spotted Astrid walking by, and smiled for a moment before heading out.

I stepped down the walkway and slowly strode up behind her. "Hey Astrid." "Aaaahhh!" she yelled, jumping into the air and spinning around, ready to give the person who startled her a black eye. When she saw it was just me, her face melted from a look of surprise and anger to relief, then to surprise again, then back to anger all within about 3 seconds. "Don't scare me like that!" she snapped. "And what are you doing walking around out here? You realize you've been out for three whole days?"

That stopped me dead in my tracks. "Wait, wait, wait, three days?" I asked. "And I still feel like this?" She nodded, then shrugged. "You passed out after you, uh, well, whatever you did," she stuttered, "you know, for Hiccup and Toothless, and you haven't moved since. Everyone thought you had killed yourself, and your family has been worried sick!" I felt a look of guilt cross my face. "How did they react while I was out?" Astrid crossed her arms. "Well, your mother and sister have been over here like every other hour since Fishlegs and I let them know, and your father basically left a death threat with the village if you didn't manage to come around." I grimaced. That sounded just about how they would react.

"Well, I'm alive now," I placated, "and by the way, if I have to heal anyone again somehow, remind me to definitely find a different way to do it." Astrid gave me a curious look. "Why did you pass out anyways?" I shrugged and smiled shyly. "I kind of forgot in the heat of the moment that in the story I read, that dragon can't just use the fire on a whim like I did. They save the fire for years before they use it. I guess it's a physical price they pay, hence the fainting." I looked around, surprised both at the fact that I wasn't being swarmed by Vikings seeing as how I was now awake, and the fact that I didn't see any sign of the dynamic duo anywhere. "Where is Hiccup, anyway?" I asked. This time Astrid was the one shrugging. "Not really sure," she answered. "I haven't seen them since they left

the house a couple of hours ago after checking on you. I heard Hiccup mention something about the cove though, and they can't get too far." "Why not?" Astrid smiled. "Because Toothless can't really fly once again."

I raised an eyebrow. "Why can't he fly? He's got both tailfins now." Astrid nodded, then pointed at Hiccup's house. "He's gotten so used to Hiccup controlling the second fin that apparently he has a tendency to crash often when flying alone. I bet that's why they're at the cove though: to practice being themselves again." I nodded. "Well, thanks then. I need to go find them."

I turned to take off, and as I spread my wings, I felt Astrid grab me firmly on the shoulder. "Hold on a minute there, Hawken," she warned, turning me back to face her. "You are certainly not going to be flying this soon after waking up, especially after what happened to you." I groaned, but nodded reluctantly. "Fine, fine, I'll walk," I complied. "I just hope they're there then." Astrid let go of my shoulder, then began walking toward the path to the forest. "And where are you going?" I asked, starting after her, quickening my pace as the villagers finally noticed me. "With you," Astrid answered. I laughed. "Oh, come on, I know my way there. You don't need to baby me." She nodded, smiling. "I know, but I'm still going to make sure you don't start flying halfway there." I glared at her, but she ignored me. "Plus, I also need to see Hiccup. He's been worrying me with that new leg of his, trying things I don't think he should be just yet." I nodded in agreement, and we disappeared into the forest, barely ahead of the villagers who were trying to talk to me all at once.

A long walk is great for a weary soul. Halfway into the 2 mile hike I finally started feeling awake, and a whole lot better. Of course, Astrid still wasn't taking any risks, and I stayed grounded the whole way. We reached the cove after about a half hour, and I could hear a bit of a commotion down below. I looked at Astrid, who just shrugged in response, and we quietly slipped into the crack leading down into the cove entrance. We stayed quiet mainly just because I had convinced Astrid to let me surprise Hiccup. As I peeked out, I saw Hiccup sort of half-limping, half-running around, chasing Toothless, who was bounding around the cove in his usual energetic style. Hiccup tripped over a rock, but when he fell, instead of groaning, he laughed. "Oh, it feels \_soooo\_ good to have those toes again," he giggled as he sat up.

"Good to see you enjoying yourself again," I said loudly, walking out into the open. "Aaaahhh!" Hiccup yelped, jumping up, losing his balance, and promptly falling over again. "Don't do that!" he snapped, but I could see a smile forming on his face. "Oh, come on now," I retorted, "you should expect that sort of thing by now." "Yeah, well, I was expecting you to still be unconscious, like you have been for the past three days," Hiccup shot back, dusting himself off and standing up again. Behind me, Astrid stepped out into the cove, and Hiccup turned to face her. "And why are you here?" he asked. Before she could answer, though...

WHUMPH! "Aaaahhhh! Toothless!" I yelled as I was pounced on and pushed to the ground, and then promptly covered in dragon slobber.

::You're alive! I was so nervous when you didn't wake up, and you

didn't move, but you're awake now! And thank you so much for bringing back Hiccup's leg and my tail! thankyouthankyouthankyou!:: Toothless continued to ramble on and on and on as he applied layer after layer of slime to my face. I sputtered and tried to push him off. "Yeah yeah, I get it, you're happy!" I griped, trying to keep him from licking me again and failing to move him away. "Look would you get off already? You're welcome!" I looked to the side to avoid another tongue swipe, and saw Astrid and Hiccup doubled over in laughter. "Yeah, some help you two are," I snapped. "Great friends I have." I looked back up at Toothless, then built up some extra muscle and finally managed to shove him off to the side. I got up and stumbled over to the pond, and proceeded to scrub my face clean of dragon spit. As I washed my face off, I heard Hiccup walk up behind me and say, "Sorry, but that was funny! And payback for scaring me earlier." I just glared at him, and he smiled in response. "Besides, it's about time someone other than me got that treatment too." I threw water at him and turned to glance at the black dragon, who was still squirming in excitement. "Oh, shut up, I can guarantee it's worse for me than you, Hiccup," I grumbled. ::Why is it worse?:: Toothless queried. ::A lot of dragons express happiness like that!:: I dried off my hands and turned to him. "Yeah, well, I can understand you, so it's like talking to another person, and people don't lick each other." "Most of the time," Astrid remarked behind me, and I heard Hiccup snort in laughter. I glared at the two of them. "Only perverted lovers do that," I snapped, "and I don't think that qualifies here."

I looked down at Hiccup's left leg, where there was once again a full boot on instead of a metal stick. "So I hear you like your new leg," I drawled. A wide, characteristically lopsided grin formed on his face. "You wouldn't believe how happy I am," he said. "Over two years of having to deal with that fake foot and all its problems, phantom pains, yadda yadda yadda, and now it's all behind me! I can actually feel things with it, I can swim normally again, I can run without major fears of tripping or getting it stuck! Think about it!" I laughed and looked at Toothless next. "Learned to fly again yet?" I asked innocently, a smirk drawing across my face. Toothless looked back at his tail and flexed the two fins, then shook his head, a little embarrassed. ::Not yet, but I'm getting closer at least,:: he admitted. "Well, did you two really expect to be back to your old selves in only a couple of days?" I asked. "I've already seen Hiccup tripping over himself numerous times, and I've only been awake here for a couple of hours." I smirked again. "Though that may just be him being his regular klutz self." Astrid snorted. "Oh, he's just clumsy," she teased. "Hey!" Hiccup snapped, giving us a glare as we both started giggling. "I'm still getting used to a whole NEW LEG here! Give me a break!" I stopped laughing and gave him an amused look. "Alright, I'll be nice and stop," I said. "How many times has Toothless crashed so far?" Now it was Hiccup's turn to start chuckling, and Toothless growled at me, his cheeks probably cherry red under the black scales. "Oh, he landed in the pond probably about ten times, and there were a few ground 'landings' so far too," Hiccup explained, still smiling. He sighed, and lost the smile. "He is getting better though. Who knows, he may be able to fly by tonight." Hiccup cast a concerned glance at his companion, and I could tell something was eating at him.

I folded my arms. "Alright, spill, what's wrong now?" I asked. Hiccup looked at me, and started to say something, but failed. He tried again, but still couldn't make the words form. I raised an eyebrow. Finally he explained quietly, "Toothless doesn't really need me

anymore. I mean, he can fly on his own, he's not tied to me in order to get around." he looked at the dragon. "What if... I mean... is there a chance that he might just leave at some point now?" My eyes widened in shock, and my mouth dropped open. He really thought that would happen? After all they went through. Toothless hissed and walked up to Hiccup, then turned and smacked him upside the head with his tail. ::Are you nuts?:: he snapped. ::Don't ever even suggest that idea again! I haven't left yet, I'm not leaving now, and I don't plan on making any attempts at leaving ever again! Got that?:: He then promptly covered Hiccup's face in drool, and grabbed him in a draconic version of a bear hug. I sighed in relief. "I don't think that needs any translation, does it?" I asked. Hiccup laughed and gasped out. "No, that... pretty much settles it! Toothless, I love you too, but I need to breathe!" I turned to look at Astrid, who was trying to hide a smile herself.

After a little persuasion, we managed to convince Toothless to let Hiccup get a little air in, and I suddenly realized something very important I needed to do. "Oh, uh, by the way guys? Can you let Stoick know I'll be back as soon as I can? I need to go talk to my family." Hiccup gave me a look of confusion for a moment, then nodded in understanding. "Yeah, you'd better do that," he said. "Your sister wouldn't leave my house for 3 hours yesterday." I smiled at that thought. "You'll be back later like today or tomorrow, though, right?" he asked. I laughed and shook my head. "Knowing my mother, I'll probably be held for interrogation through tomorrow anyways." I turned to go, and then another thought hit me. "Oh, crap! I have to get my graduation gown tomorrow too! Yeah, Hiccup, I won't be back until Thursday." He nodded, and Astrid clapped a hand on my shoulder. "We'll let the chief know, don't worry." I smiled. "Thanks."

I turned toward the direction of the portal, spread a pair of wings, and made a short glide up to the ring of trees. I waved to the trio below in the cove, and stepped through to the other side. Little had changed at the house, thank goodness, and I walked up to the back door and opened it, looking carefully in. "Anyone home?"

"HAWKEN!" I stumbled back as Holly came racing around the corner and plowing into me, squeezing me until I thought I would pop. "Astrid told us what happened! Are you okay?" she asked, looking up at me with concerned eyes. I smiled and hugged her back. "Just a little something I wasn't prepared for, that's all. It just made me really tired." I went and sat down on the couch, and Holly followed me, a questioning look on her face. "How did you do it?" she asked. "Healing Hiccup and Toothless, I mean. I saw them when we went to check on you, and Hiccup had a foot again! And Toothless had his tail!" I laughed. "Tell you what. Later tonight I'll tell you what happened. Right now, though, where is mo-"

As if on cue, my mom walked out of her bedroom and out into the living room, giving me a look that made me cringe. She had some tears in her eyes, and her arms were crossed. "You have any idea how much you scared me?" she asked accusingly. I spread my hands out wide. "What?" I protested. "You think if I can save a life or two I'm going to pass on that chance? Especially if they're my best friends? Hiccup and Toothless would have died if I hadn't done something!" My mom nodded. "But what if you had died from saving them? You were out for days!" I stood up and walked over to the greenhouse. "Is my life just so much more important than an entire village? My efforts took an extremely exhausting tool, alright, I'll admit, but nothing I did

could have actually killed m-"

I turned around and stopped talking when I saw her just smiling. My arms dropped. "You're just giving me a hard time, aren't you," I said. She walked up and put her arms around me, giving me a hug of her own. "It's a mother's job, isn't it?" she asked jokingly. "No, Hawken, I'm actually very proud of you. You did the right thing, and I'm just happy you're alright." She stepped back and looked at me. I spread my hands again. "Well, if that's all done with, yes, I'm glad I'm alright too. But there's, uh, still a little bit of unfinished business I was supposed to take care of, concerning the invaders."

"No, you're not leaving again," my mom said. "While you may have been out most of the time, you've been over there for about 5 days. It's time you spent a little time with your family, and you have a couple of things you need to do here as well. Not to mention you have to go pick up your cap and gown tomorrow, remember?" I nodded and smiled. "Well, it's not like I didn't expect that to happen." "And, you are going to have dinner with your family, and you are going to tell us what happened over there. Something like that doesn't go by without a story," my mom said with a smile. I sighed. "Of course."

### 33. Chapter 33: Dealing With Crusaders

\*\*A/N-Only 3 chapters left after this, you can expect those to be uploaded next weekend. We have one last little adventure to go on before this book comes to an end. So in two weeks: the next adventure begins!\*\*

\*\*As always, please let me know what you think! \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 33</p>

#### Dealing with Crusaders

As it so happened, after two days straight of just dealing with things around the house and dealing with graduation gown pickup, and so on, I nearly forgot to go back and help the Hooligans with our captives. On Thursday morning, it was actually Hiccup who managed to remind me about my job to do.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

I ran into the kitchen and opened the sliding door. "Sorry, sorry, I forgot!" I said apologetically. "Uh huh. Well, everyone's waiting for you," Hiccup drawled. "You're really the only one with enough of a chance to convince these guys we're right. Now come on, no one's opened the Arena cages for over a day now."

I turned and yelled into the house, "Mom, I'm heading over to Berk!" "Okay!" she replied. "Just be back before dinner this time!" We hurried out of the house and through the portal to the cove, where Toothless was impatiently waiting. It was a risk letting the Vikings run around my yard, even Hiccup though he bore some resemblance to me, as so few people knew about the portal. As such, we absolutely couldn't let the dragons over very often due to my newfound popularity.

It didn't take too long to reach the Arena, where everyone was waiting. Stoick was, surprisingly, only a little bit irritated. "Ye do know yer late, right?" he asked as we landed. "Yeah, sorry, but there were a few family matters to take care of, along with a few other things," I replied just as hastily. "Now, where are all the captives?" Stoick pointed to the ring. "They're all in there. By the way, it took quite a while to remove the ones in the hall. Great fun though," he chuckled. The small crowd that had gathered had also laughed. Hiccup nodded. "Yeah, that commander of theirs ended up getting dropped into the firepit!" I couldn't help but crack a grin of my own and nodded. "Well, at least they should be a little bit more subdued after that. They don't have their weapons with them, do they?" Gobber, who had been standing off to the side, shook his head. "Nae, we got 'em all. Some interesting designs, I must say."

I walked over to the gate and lifted it up, shutting it behind me. I walked to the next gate, and before I opened it, I turned to the Vikings behind me. "By the way, make sure you're all on guard outside here, in case they somehow get past me." I heard a bit of laughter from someone, but it didn't last too long after they realized I was serious. "Well, someone has really good faith in me," I muttered, and opened the second gate into the arena. I gave a signal to open the doors, and slowly, they all ground open.

I didn't see a single person inside. I raised an eyebrow, and walked a little further into the ring. Then I noticed that the cages were a lot wider than the doors, and there were darker recesses on each side.

"NOW!"

I jerked into alert and ready-to-fight mode, and watched as hundreds of men rushed out of the cages. It was amusing, however, as nearly every single one skidded to a halt when they caught sight of me standing in front of the only exit, and the rest followed suit when they noticed their comrades no longer making a break for the exit. I laughed, because it was so ridiculous: one teen causing an entire army to rethink their plan.

"I see I've made quite the impression on most of you," I joked. I watched as the commander and the priest stepped forward out of the crowd. Unsurprisingly, neither of them looked happy at all to see me. "What do you want now, demon?" Attonius growled. At that I bet my eyes flashed through a number of shades before they settled on my usual glowing angered red. "Just how many times do I have to explain to you hard-headed people that I am not a demon?!" I snapped. "I am quite the opposite and would just as likely kill myself as align with the devil!" "Then why do you help these heathens hold back the conquest of God?" I couldn't help but laugh at the ridiculousness of that. "You are not the conquest of God. He would not have a 'conquest!' You raid lands to add to your kingdom, push out any other views to make room only for what you wish to believe, and even kill those who actually believe many of the same things you do! That has nothing to do with God!" Brutus stepped forward and spoke up. "And who, pray tell, are the ones that we are killing, that follow God?" "The dragons, of course."

The whole army burst out laughing, none more so, of course than the two irritating leaders of theirs. "You still think that? Those filthy creatures? You must be joking!" the priest gasped. I just crossed my

arms and glared at him. When they would not stop laughing, I got fed up. I shot a small stream of ice above their heads toward the wall behind them. It hit with an earsplitting crack, and the sheet of ice spread across the stone wall with an eerie creaking, straining noise. That shut them up fairly quickly, and I leveled a cold stare, no pun intended, at the priest. "I'm really starting to feel sorry that you managed to survive my destroying your ship, Attonius," I hissed. No reply came out, of course.

"I have a story to tell you all," I said louder, broadcasting to the entire group, "and from there you are free to make your own decisions about your course of action. You can either learn your lesson and leave to warn others of the wrongs they are doing, and never return here with intentions of war again, or I will leave you to the Vikings and our friends the dragons.

"Nearly a year ago, I had no knowledge of this village existing. I found a gateway that led me here, as I come from a place very different from where we stand now, a place that is filled with diverse views and opinions. Some people follow my own views, others are very different. Where I come from, dragons don't exist, and many people also believe that they would be evil, terrifying creatures if they did." "Then how come you can turn into a dragon, if they don't exist where you come from?" a soldier asked. I smiled. "I met a dragon when I first came to this island, one who carried a special gift. She passed it on to me, the gift of belonging to both worlds, in more ways than one," I said.

"I have been a servant of the Lord for most of my life, and I know many of the teachings, the passages you claim to say you follow. The path you are taking is also part of my own long past history, and they, too, failed in their quest, for the same reasons. It was not the right path; it was a path of destruction. But this time, things can be different. You have the choice to learn. And the first thing you can learn is the FACT I discovered: that the dragons also follow the same being I do. Granted, they don't do so in the same ways we do, but there's a reason for that." Attonius smirked. "And what reason is that?" he asked. "Man was made special, yes?" I asked. He nodded. "All forms of life follow God in some way, even if we can't see them doing so. It may be through how they were designed to behave, or through conscious actions. Man was given dominion over animals, not to dominate and to destroy, but to care for the life earth. Dragons are much the same, though most still look to us to help take care of them, like all living things. They are like the staff in the hand of the shepherd, a guide and support for us. They are sentient creatures capable of making choices, and though most cannot speak the same language as we do, they—" "What do you mean most?" a soldier interrupted. I sighed. "There are some that have learned to speak like we do. If you ever meet Camicazi, of the Bog Burglar tribe, you'll probably meet her dragon, who can talk to us.

"But back to what I was saying, most can't speak to us, but I can understand them, due to the gift I was given. They make mistakes, and just like with people, some mistakes can cause great strife. Those that go the wrong way in life have painted bad images for the rest of them. They are susceptible to deception and control, which caused the 300 year war that raged up here until Hiccup and his friend the Night Fury, Toothless, ended it." I looked at Attonius again. "If dragons are evil, what would possess a dragon shot down by a human to help

that human try and bring peace? If they are what you say they are, Toothless would have killed Hiccup the second he was let free. I can keep going on and on like this, with experience of over a year of dealing with the people and dragons here, but I think the last thing I need to say is: people also have a choice. The Vikings may not believe what you or I do, but they are good at the core, and should not be forced to do what they do not want to do. The followers of God are to be teachers, not slave drivers, and just like any teacher, it is not their choice if their students learn what they give. The student must choose to learn."

I stepped back now and stayed silent. At first, no one did anything, but then Attonius and Brutus turned to each other and started discussing quietly with each other. I leaned against the gate and waited, watching and murmurs and whispers swept through the crowd. Not that I was going to tell them, but I could hear everything they were saying. Some weren't convinced, but I had struck a chord somewhere with most.

After about 15 minutes, Attonius finally turned back to face me. "I have one question," he said. "How do we know we can trust you? You protect the people and the dragons we have all been taught are dangerous. How do we know you aren't just trying to deceive us?" I stood up and motioned for them to follow me. "Just you two, come with me," I said. I opened the gate, and they followed me out. The Vikings tensed up, fearing something about to go south. I gestured with my hand that they should relax, and then morphed, transforming into a Night Fury, and crouched down. "Get on," I told the two Crusaders. I saw both of them step back slightly, and sighed. "If I truly wanted to deceive or hurt you," I placated, "then I could have killed you all at any point and time. I have more than enough power to do so, as you both know."

At first they still didn't move, then Attonius slowly, reluctantly, walked forward and gingerly climbed up onto my back. Brutus did so after. Once they were on, I unfolded my wings, gestured to Hiccup and Toothless, and took off slowly. I felt both of my passengers tense up, and as I rose up higher, I glanced back at them. Both had their eyes closed, and were holding tightly to me so as not to fall off. "Open your eyes," I said.

They did, and as I rose up beyond the first layer of clouds, I saw their faces begin to change. Fear was replaced with wonder and awe, their apprehension slowly lost. I glided across the sea, and around the island, for a good while, not saying anything, skimming the clouds and diving down close enough to touch the sea. I wanted them to see peace and beauty, before I said anything more.

Finally, as I turned to start heading toward Berk again, Hiccup and Toothless slowly following behind me, I spoke again. "This is a view few people will ever get to see if war against the people and creatures you don't understand continues," I said. "The dragons see God's beauty on earth from the sky, cloudscapes and landscapes we don't. They are the protectors of the sky and sea, and we are protectors of sea and land. They are the powerful predators that still are humble enough to let us ride them, and we are the ones who give them safe havens where we find peace."

"Tell me, if we were such a bad group, why would I show you this?" I asked. "Why would I give you the chance to see a wonder none of your

people will likely ever experience?" Attonius shook his head slowly. "I-I don't know." He looked at me with hurt in his eyes, guilt from his past actions. "I nearly killed your friends there," he gestured to Hiccup and Toothless beside us, "and I nearly had this village destroyed. Yet, you do not seek revenge immediately, and youâ€|. show me this. I am starting to think thatâ€|. that maybe I was wrong." I nodded. "If we are to want peace, we must be peaceful ourselves. You do not strike the first blow. Let he who is without sin cast the first stone, and let the seed find the good soil."

I felt more than saw Attonius jerk in shock. "You-you do know, then, what the-the bible speaks" he stuttered. I smiled. "I know far more than just those verses, too," I said. "As I said, I am a good person, and I only do the things necessary to keep my friends safe."

We landed again slowly, at the arena, and Attonius and Brutus slid off and simply stood in front of me for a minute, as I melted back to human. I looked at Stoick. "The first step in changing the future," I said, "is to change yourself. The second is to touch another." I gestured to the two. "They have been touched now, but it is their choice to let the flower bloom in them." I looked at them, and they nodded. "Weâ€| we must apologize for our actions," Brutus said. "We have been misled, and maybe we have also misled others." "We wish to make amends," Attonius said quietly, "but before we can do so, I fear we must return home, but our ships are no longer fully usable." Stoick nodded. "You wish to be able to make repairs and restock." The two nodded, and Stoick stood, well, stoically for a moment, before smiling. "Very well, you may stay long enough to rebuild your ships and resupply them." He signaled Spitelout, who walked up to the men and gestured for them to follow him in order to make arrangements for repair. Stoick then looked at me. "I don't know what all you did, but I'm glad it worked. We may not have problems with them again, thanks to you." I shook my head. "No, that's not quite true. I just opened their eyes," I said. "It is they who are now the ones to make that change." He nodded, then turned to the arena again. "Well, now I have to figure out what to do with the rest o' them, at least until they leave."

\* \* \*

><p>It took nearly a week for the Crusaders to finish their ships and find enough supplies to at least get back to the mainland, and by the time they had left, I had seen a few of them actually laughing with the villagers and being friendly with the dragons, though most still flinched whenever they got near each other. We never did see them again, after that, but we did eventually get word that the Crusades from their kingdom had nearly halted, and there were peaceful interactions with other Viking tribes and their trade ships. As promised, Berk eventually was visited by a ship carrying enough supplies to repay them for the damages done, though by then of course everything was already rebuilt.</p>

Oh, and we also got a notice from Cami that a group of the soldiers had visited their island. Apparently, someone didn't quite believe me when I said that Stormfly could talk. Their suspicions were apparently quickly put to rest. But, in the end there, at least I can say that one more real disaster was avoided somewhere down the line, and eventually, sometimes all it takes is a little convincing to get everything put straight.

## 34. Chapter 34: Kidnapped

\*\*A/N-And so begins the last adventure of Book 1! Two chapters left after this, and then we move on. Here we also get some clues as to just how the morphing power works, and remember those clues; they come to play a very large part in the rest of the series.\*\*

\*\*As always, please let me know what you think!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 34</p>

Kidnapped

Ever been to Yellowstone? It's an amazing place, a natural wonder. It's especially amazing from an aerial point of view. Hot springs, geysers, fumaroles, and just simply the layout of the land itself, it's beautiful! I was still stuck staying near my family, just to make sure I didn't lose track of where they were. The park is a big, big place, and no matter how powerful you are, parents still worry about your safety. Oh well, I saw plenty of really cool things.

Once it was time to go, though, it was a long trip back home. We stopped a few places, and ended getting back well past midnight. We all fell asleep very quickly, not even bothering to get undressed like usual. Turns out, that was a very good decision that night, at least for me. I was expecting to sleep for a long, long time. At least I was right about one thingâ€|. I slept very, very deeplyâ€|.

Until I was woken up in the early morning by a sharp, stinging pain in the back of my neck.

"AAAHHHOOWWWWWWW!" I shrieked, reaching up and gingerly feeling the spot where the pain was. I also felt a long, cold metal shaft sticking out. I pulled it out, looked at the dart, and turned to see four large, darkly dressed people standing over me in my room. The dim light from my radio began to swirl around me, what little color began to fade to grays and blacks. As I fell back against my pillow, I heard one of the people whisper, "Grab him already and let's go!"

As everything blacked out, only two thoughts went through my head. The first was, \_How on earth did they get past the dogs?\_ The second was, \_Gee, I'm glad I went to sleep with clothes on.\_

\* \* \*

><p>"Hawken! Get up already, it's eleven o' clock!" Denise opened the door to her son's room. "We all were up late last night, but we still need to take Grandpa home! You can't justâ€|" her voice trailed off as she saw Hawken's bed, cleanly made and empty. "He never makes his bed that well," she said, and left the room. "Holly!" Her daughter looked out of her room, where she was still unpacking. "What!" she yelled. "Have you seen your brother anywhere?" Holly shrugged and looked toward the back of the house. "Maybe he went to go see Hiccup. Or maybe they needed him for something." Denise sighed and rubbed her forehead, and went back to unpacking herself. "Well, we need to take

Grandpa home, and we're not going to find him in time to do so. We'll find him when we come back." She looked out toward the portal. "I swear, I need to find a way to limit him. He's spending way too much time over there."<p>

\* \* \*

><p>Faint noise surrounded me, my head pounding. I groaned quietly, and tried to open my eyes. The light blinded me, and I closed them again. That's when I realized I didn't recognize the sounds at all. There were whirring sounds, computer beeps, and what sounded like someone rapidly typing somewhere. Barely squinting, at first, I slowly let my eyes adjust, and opened them a little more. I immediately knew I was nowhere near home anymore.<p>

I was lying on a thin, metal, semi-erect table, covered in sensors and needles and missing my shirt, and strapped down with thick metal restraints. To one side of the room, there was a door and numerous steel cabinets with who knows what in them. Along another wall was a row of computer monitors, with what looked like pulses, heart rates, and things like that running across the screens, along with numerous instruments I didn't recognize at all. On the other side of the room, more monitors, scales, test tubes etc., and... a young, blondish man in a white lab coat.

I grinned mischievously, gathering in a breath and modifying my throat a little. Whoever these people were, they weren't going to \*\*EVER\*\* mess with me again. I opened my mouth.

"HEY!"

The power of a Thunderdrum mixed with my own angered voice, my yell reverberated around the room. A stand of test tubes bounced across the nearby table and smashed to the floor, and to my satisfaction, the sound waves caused a thin crack to crawl across the thick window on the other side of the room. The man in the lab coat shot three feet straight up out of his chair and landed very ungracefully, splaying out across the floor and falling backwards. As he picked himself up and looked at me, I fixed him with a glowing red glare.

"Y-you're you're awake!" he stammered. "The last time I checked, yes," I growled. "But the tranquilizer shouldn't have worn off for at least another day!" he wailed, scrambling to his monitor and typing away again, looking for something. "You're systems are all still normal, the effects should still be working!" I smirked. "Yeah, well, I'm not completely human," I drawled, "but you certainly already know that, considering that's the only reason I've got all these wires all over me."

I heard voices outside the room, and saw another man run past the window, slowing a bit to look with surprise at the crack that now adorned the glass from my scream. He stepped over to the door and opened it, stepping in and walking over to the lab-coated man. "What on earth was that noise?" the man asked, none too quietly and none too nicely. "And what cracked the glass? That was tempered!" The scientist pointed carefully at me, while I snarled, showing off some slightly sharper-than-normal teeth. "The boy did that." The new man, dressed in a mostly black, very expensive looking suit, looked directly at me. He had dark, nearly black hair and a relatively

strong build, contrasting the thin, dirty blond lab coated man. "So, you're awake already," the man said. "Funny, since the tranquilizer should still have you out. You should have been unconscious for quite a while yet." "So I've been told," I deadpanned, narrowing my eyes further. "What exactly do you want with me?"

This time, I wasn't the one to don a wild grin. "I am John Malin," the man said, "and I am a scientist and visionary." I groaned. "Oh, great, here we go." Malin gave me a fisheye, then continued. "I've been working for a very long time on a plan to revolutionize the world. Your abilities, if we can manage to somehow tap into them, could give me and my colleagues an unlimited number of possibilities." "Yeah, like what?" I said, giving him a venomous look, and taking note of the scientist trying hard to just focus on the computer instead of getting in Malin's way. "The governing bodies in this world have gone way south," Malin continued. "They have the wrong ideas, and need to be straightened out. It's time for a new ruling around the world." I sighed, already starting to see where this was going. "With the abilities you have, even a small number of men would be all it takes to overthrow just about every country on earth!" Malin said, sounding more insane by the minute. "Even the smallest person would be able to defeat the strongest, with barely the lift of a finger. People would have to listen to us, they wouldn't have a choice! We could do anything we pleased, run things however we wanted to!" I shook my head. "Changing the world doesn't work like that," I snapped. "You have to get the approval of the people you lead." "And look where that got us," Malin said. I shrugged, or at least as best as I could while strapped in. "Doesn't matter anyways. I'm not helping you." Malin snorted. "At this point it doesn't really matter either to me," he said. "We've taken enough samples already, that we're bound to find something. It's just a matter of time." At this point, I realized why I had so many needles in me. Luckily I could deaden the nerves in my skin, another trick of the reptile trade.

I tried to move so that I could take the needles out, but my hands, chest and feet were all strapped down tight, and as I moved, the restraints tightened. "There's really no use struggling," Malin chuckled. "They contract if you change shape, and they're too hard to cut through, or break with any amount of strength you might have. We made sure of it." I stopped and sighed. "You still won't get any answers from me." I wasn't about to tell him that extra strength was the only thing I got from the dragon side of me, or the shape shifting. I gave Malin another venomous glare, and began to heat up the restraints. "You will pay for this, sooner or later."

\* \* \*

><p>"Have you seen Hawken anywhere?"</p>

Denise had finally had enough, and had gone through the portal and over to the village of Berk to find her son, who had now been gone over a day. While that in itself wasn't too strange, Hawken knew he had things to do still, and had never left before without at least letting her or his dad know in some way that he was leaving.

Astrid shrugged. "He hasn't been seen on the island recently, if that's what you mean." Astrid had happened to be the first person Denise had run across, on the path to the village. Astrid was out working on her aim with her weaponry, and hadn't recalled seeing

Hawken since they had left for Yellowstone. "Do you at least have any idea where he may be?" Denise asked. Astrid shook her head. "But, he's likely with Hiccup. And Hiccup is either at his house or at the forge at this time of day. Come on, we can go find him." They headed down the path toward the village.

About 15 minutes later, they finally found Hiccup working in the forge on some unknown project, Toothless lying nearby. "Hiccup!" Astrid yelled. Hiccup jerked and looked up. "Hi Astrid. Please don't scare me when-oh!" He stuttered, seeing Hawken's mother next to the teen Viking. "Uh, hi Mrs. Carlton. Can I, uh, ask why you're here?" He set down his tool and walked over to the window.

"Hawken's missing," Denise said. "What?!" ::What?!!:: Both Hiccup and Toothless jerked up at this. Toothless came running over to the window. "Calm, Toothless, panicking won't help," Hiccup said, and turned to Denise. "What exactly do you mean, he's missing?" "I haven't seen him since we got back two nights ago. He didn't tell me he was going anywhere either." Hiccup stood there, thinking for a minute. "Well, I haven't seen him either, but if he came through the portal, I know who will have." He turned to Toothless. "Can you go see if any of the Terrors have seen him?" Toothless nodded, and bolted out the door, taking off in the direction of the cove.

Denise turned to Hiccup questioningly. "The Terrors?" Hiccup raised an eyebrow. "You mean you haven't... oh, that's right, it's been a long while since you were around here last. A group of Terrible Terrors took it upon themselves for some reason to watch the portal for anyone coming or going, and let us know if it was someone we didn't know, or if there was a problem." Denise nodded, still working on the idea of the dragons being that good at problem solving.

About ten minutes later, Toothless glided down and landed outside the forge. He looked at Denise, and just shook his head. No translation was needed: Hawken hadn't come through the portal since their trip. At this point, suffice to say his mother was starting to feel very anxious. Hiccup looked back at Toothless. "Think you could find him?" he asked. "What?" Denise asked, missing what was going on that the moment. Toothless nodded, and turned to let Hiccup climb on. Hiccup looked back at Denise. "We may be able to find where he went from your house. Come on, get on, it's faster to fly."

Denise hesitated, but the fact that her son was missing spurred her on. She climbed carefully up behind Hiccup. "Hiccup, wait up!" The three turned to see Astrid on Thorn. "If Hawken's in trouble, I'm helping." Hiccup just nodded, and took off, gliding over the forests toward the portal.

The view was amazing, but after that day, Denise tried to keep to using the paths around the island.

\* \* \*

><p>A few hours had gone by, and I had kept the heating process to a minimum so that nothing would be immediately noticeable, as I wanted to catch these lunatics by surprise. Not to mention I doubted it, but I wanted to see if they actually would find anything genetic or otherwise that connected to my abilities. Even I had no clue how they worked. Eventually I heard something that made me smile a little.</p>

"Dr. Malin?" the scientist, who I had discovered was named Arthur, called out. Malin came back into the room. "Have you found something yet?" he asked excitedly. "It's been hours since we started these test. I thought you were one of the best sequencers." Arthur shook his head worriedly. "That's just it, there's nothing abnormal. His gene sequence is perfectly normal for a human being, absolutely no sign of any other species sequences. There's nothing in skin, blood, bone, hair... everything is perfectly normal!" He looked at me, absolutely perplexed. "There is nothing there that should cause what he can do!" I chuckled, and the two men turned to look at me. "I told you, you wouldn't get any answers from me. That includes any samples you get from me." John walked over to me, and looked me over, frowning. Then he looked at my head. "Have we tried the brainwave sensors yet?" Arthur shook his head. "That's the last thing we have to try." I sighed again as he went over to the computer and pressed another button. I felt vibrations and other odd sensations from the sensors they had placed on my head, and glared at the two, my eyes flashing bright red again.

There was a beep from the computer, and Arthur turned to it. "We have a reading!" he said. He typed for a minute, then gasped and slumped. "What?" Malin pressed. "What is it?" Arthur gestured with his hands. "It-it's impossible!" he said. "What?" "Well, you-you see, people use only about, uh, maybe 15% of their brain capacity normally. Neurons grow and lose connections, and there are usually only so many. But him—" he gestured to me, "-hi-his brain is on overload! There are connections that shouldn't be there! His brainwaves are off the charts!" Malin raised an eyebrow. "And so, what does that mean?" Arthur spread his hands out. "He's an anomaly. No human should be able to even survive that amount of neurological capacity! A-and I don't have a clue where the energy to run that amount of power is coming from!" He waved his hands at me again. "A human body cannot physically generate the power it would take for that amount of connection. His power, his abilities are not stemming from him, they're coming from another source." He scratched his head. "The only guess I have is from when I learned about metaphysics, the so-called dark matter and dark energy in the universe." "The what?" Malin groused. I snorted. "I thought you were a scientist too," I shot at him. He ignored me and looked back at the blonde, who stuttered again for a moment. "We-well, supposedly most of our universe is composed of sources of matter and energy we can't see or touch at the moment," he said. "If my guess is correct, something has connected that boy to that source of power. There is literally no physical way to do that!" Malin snarled and grabbed Arthur by the coat. "Then how in the world did the boy end up with such abilities?!" Arthur trembled and shook his head. "I-I don't know!"

"It's because where I got the ability, science is not necessarily the only thing that governs life," I said. Malin dropped Arthur again and walked over to me. "And where, pray tell, did you get your abilities?" he asked quietly, the way someone does right before they blow. I smiled and shook my head. "Well, that's just the thing. I can't tell you. One, you wouldn't believe me, and two, there's no way even in Hell that I would risk telling a lunatic like you a secret like that."

And that's what did it. At the bottom of the barrel, with no answers and his plans basically faulty at the root, Malin lost it.

"AAAAUUUGGGH!" He slammed his hands down on the restraints holding me,

ready to punch me in the face with the next move. His next move, however, was courtesy of me.

"ARRRGHHHHH!" he screamed, leaping back and falling on his rear, clutching both of his now bright red, semi-blistered hands. "What on earth?" he cried, looking back at me in shock. I smiled. "I decided not to mention, shape-shifting isn't the only ability I managed to gain," sneered, and sent my arms and legs into overdrive heating. The metal began to glow like my body, first dull, the bright red, then orange, to nearly white, and immense heat began to radiate out. At the same time, the sensors on my head began to cause the monitors around the room to beep like crazy from the energy readings they were picking up. The heat caused Malin and Arthur to be forced to back up, slowly, toward the door. "Impossible," Arthur whispered. "Yes, but as you stated everything else I can do is impossible as well," I said. "Apparently, not for me though." With a quick flick of the wrists, I snapped the now greatly weakened restraints on my arms, and then did the same for the ones on my legs.

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><p>Toothless walked into Hawken's room and began sniffing around. Almost instantly, he bristled and began snarling menacingly. "Well, he appears to know what happened," Hiccup said, walking up. Toothless exited the room again and headed out to the garage door. When Denise opened it he leapt out into the garage and went out the open back door, accidentally knocking over a couple of empty water jugs in the process. "Sorry, I'll get those," Hiccup said, picking them back up. Then they followed Toothless back into the back yard, where he was following a scent trail toward the back gate. Denise walked up to the gate, and held her hand, opening it and looking out around the car parked up front. "Okay, there's no one out there," she said, then stepped back to let Toothless pass. He continued to follow the trail out to the edge of the street, and then looked to the west, growling before he turned and ran back to the back yard. "Okay, so what was that?" Denise asked. "Hold on," Hiccup replied.</p>

They followed the dragon back toward Hawken's garden area, where Toothless cleared out a spot in the dirt, and started writing with one of his claws. Yes, writing. A few months before Hawken had shown up, Hiccup had taught Toothless how to write in runes to communicate more easily, before they had a translator.

Astrid walked up behind Hiccup and looked over his shoulder. "What's it say?" she asked. Hiccup knelt down and started reading what Toothless had written, and shook his head. "He wasâ€|. He was kidnapped." "What?!" Denise exclaimed. Hiccup grimaced. "That's what Toothless says happened." "Isâ€| is there any way to find him?" Hiccup looked at Toothless, who shook his head and wrote something else in the dirt. "He says, not with how fast your, uh, cars go. With how long ago he was taken, he could be hundreds of miles from here." Hiccup's eyes widened. "And-and if he was put on one of those 'airplanes' you have, he could be a lot further away than that!"

At this point, everyone just ran out of words, and sat down, exhausted. No one could speak, or would speak, about whether or not Hawken could make it back on his own from wherever he was, or if that was it.

Suddenly, Toothless perked up and started writing again. Hiccup

noticed and sat up to see. "Uh, Denise, we don't have any way to find him, but we don't know everything about your world," he said. "Is there anyone around here who would be able to help us, you know, like a search party or something?" Denise sat up as well, then turned and ran toward the house. "I need to call the police!"

Astrid looked over at Hiccup. "Police?" "Law enforcement. Hawken explained it to me once." "Oh."

\* \* \*

><p>The second the restraints snapped the two men bolted out the room and locked the door. I extended a set of razor claws and with a loud screech, tore through the strap across my chest and broke it open. Once I slid down to the floor, I looked around, and found my missing shirt on a nearby shelf. Once dressed, I looked toward the window, where Arthur and Malin were still standing, looks of surprise painted on their faces. A smart, but futile maneuver on their part to be on the other side of the glass. I smiled, looked around the room at all the computers and files and instruments full of information on me, and let loose a stream of fire around the room, watching wild mild enjoyment as everything melted and flames swirled around the room. Once I was sure everything was sufficiently ruined, I turned to face Malin again.<p>

He was shaking with fury, and turned and yelled something down the hallway. Suddenly, two walls of thick, tempered steel came sliding down over the glass on both sides. My view was blocked from the men outside, but not my hearing. I heard feet running off in some unknown direction. They thought I was sufficiently caged in.

I smiled and shook my head. "When will you people ever learn?" I muttered, a smirk growing across my face. I focused on an image of a Timberjack, and quickly filled the room, brimming with spines and razor edges. I could have easily escaped another, more subtle way, but I felt like proving a point. I looked at the steel wall, and whipped my tail fast enough to make the air whistle. The blades lining it drove into the metal and sliced with an ear-splitting scream through, revealing glass behind it. I grabbed with my claws and pulled on the steel, ripping it away, and then rammed the edges of my wings into the glass, shattering it and gouging into the thicker metal wall past that. One more slam, and it began to tear and buckle. I reared back, and slammed my full weight into the wall.

SCREEEEEEE!

The wall screamed as it ripped apart, and took down part of the wall surrounding what was the window, and I slid out casually, reverting back to my own self. Looking around, I was faced with three hallways to choose from as to where I should go. I peered down each one, and to my disappointment, there was no one to be seen, so the choice was up to me. Unfortunately, there were also no signs telling me which way was out, either. I sighed, and turned left, walking down the direction I had first seen Malin come up from. Eventually it had to go somewhere, and if worse came to worse, I could always go Shadow and take the easy way out. But what fun is that?

The hallway continued for a little ways, then split in two directions again. The hallway to my left was dark and empty, all the lights off.

The hallway to my rightâ€¹

"FREEZE!"

A wall of men in dark clothing and standard bulletproof gear was standing across the path, blocking my exit. Each one had a semi-automatic rifle aimed at me. I smirked. "Freeze? I can do that," I replied. I pulled in a breath, and let out a cloud of thick, billowing mist that blocked their view of me, and forced them to slowly move backward. As the mist rolled outward, the walls, floor and ceiling all began to crackle as they froze, and ice crystals grew outward. As the men continued to back up, I casually walked through the freezing mist, growing rough pads on my feet to keep from slipping, and my skin becoming coated in a layer of frozen armor, clinking and thickening as I moved forward. I spread out a pair of ice blue wings into the cloud, coating them in sharp ice crystals as well.

"Tell me the way out of this place, and I'll leave you alone here," I snapped. "Absolutely not," one of the men said. "Our orders are to keep you contained in here." I shrugged, and looked up at a pipeline that ran along the corner of the ceiling. I could hear water rushing through it. I reached up with ice-coated claws, and sliced it. The water came rushing out, and as it did, I iced it again. The now super-cooled water rushed past the men, surrounding their feet and freezing as it hit anything solid, building into a thick layer around their legs and continuing to build all the way to the walls. I froze the hole in the pipe and the water stopped rushing out, then turned to the men again. My claws clacked as I stepped onto the still-thickening layer of ice, somewhat enjoying the look of growing fear in their eye as my skin shifted in color again and I changed shape, turning anthracite black with glowing red eyes, and an overall nightmarish appearance.

At this point it wasn't surprising that the man at the front of the group lost it. He swung his rifle up at me, aimed the barrel right at my head and pulled the triggerâ€¹. and promptly dropping the whole gun when the bullet ripped through the ceiling behind me while I stood there unfazed, still glaring at him like he was a pest I was about to squish.

"Wha-what are you?" he stammered. I leaned in close to his face, causing him to flinch and lean away as far as the ice would let him. "Depends on your actions really," I hissed. "I can be your worst nightmare, a dream come true, a lifesaver, a messenger, so on, so forth. I tend to try and be nice, but you just tried to kill me, all you people kidnapped me and took me away from my family and friends, and as far as I know, my friend's and family's lives could be on the line right now and I have no clue where I am, so I'm really feeling like being that worst nightmare I just mentioned." I stood back and vaporized myself, melting into the shadows around the edges of the ice and the pipes in the hall. "You can't kill me in this form anyways," I hissed. "After all, how do you kill a Shadow?" I reformed behind the popsicles before they had a chance to figure out what had just happened. "Now," I said sharply, causing them all to jerk and try and spin around, "you will tell me how I can find the way out of this building and I'll let you go, or I will set fire to the hallway here and leave you just as you are if you refuse."

This time, they were far more compliant. After all, when you think

your life hangs in the balance, you'll say anything to stay alive. The man nearest me pointed behind me. "J-j-just take the elevator up," he stammered. "Six floors! Take the right hallway, it'll go right to the exit!" I nodded. "Thank you for being so agreeable this time," I said lightly. "In returnâ€œ!" the smile on my face morphed into a more mischievous look, and I raised my bladed tail above my head. "Wait!" the man who had spoken last yelled. "We told you how to get out! Please don't killâ€œ!"

CRACK!

My tail whipped down and slammed into the ice, causing it to crack and break open, freeing the men. I sat back for a moment as they looked at me, dumbfounded. "I am not a killer, or at least I try not to be when I can help it," I said. "You are free to leave, and I suggest you do so quickly, but you have been warned." I turned and in an instant raced down the hallway to the elevator doors. I melted through the cracks and raced up the shaft to the 6th door up, and slithered back out into the corridor on the other side.

Just as the men had said, there were a few choices, but I turned and started down the farthest right hall. As I did so, I stayed halfway in shadow form, as I half-expected someone else to jump out somewhere and shoot at me again. The hallway ran on, turning and twisting here and there, but no new branches showed up. I began to wonder if I had been lied to again, but I came to one last corner and walked around-

BANG!

>"Well, at least I did find the right direction," I drawled, staring at John Malin again, who was standing right in front of heavy glass doors with a few more armed men. Thinking he had missed, Malin raised the gun again, took aim, and fired a second bullet. Once again, nothing happened to me, though the wall behind me became a mess, and just like the man downstairs, Malin dropped his gun in shock. The other men looked at their weapons and decided that standing right there was a bad idea, and turned and ran out the glass doors, leaving Malin alone with me. I smiled and stepped forward. "Like I told some of your friends, you can't kill a Shadow," I teased, walking right up to him. Malin dropped to the ground, cowering now. "Don't make it painful, please!" he wailed. I raised an eyebrow, then smiled and thrust my black snout right into his face. "I'm not a killer. Besides, the best way to teach a person a lesson is to let them live anyways. You'll live, but if you ever come near me or my family again, I will make sure you wish you were dead!" I backed up, then spun and smacked him upside the head with the flat of my tail blades. He fell to the ground, unconscious.<p>

I dragged him out the doors, and took him away from the building, dropping him underneath a pine tree about a hundred yards away. Then, I flew back to the building, which was a relatively discreet, white and plain structure surrounded on all sides by forest and a wide bank of concrete. I went to the back of the structure, and ignited a small fire, setting off alarms and watching as a large number of people raced out of doors on nearly all sides, waiting until nobody else came out. All in all, I would say there were about 150 people in that building, and they all raced toward the trucks and other vehicles on the other side from where I was fanning the anthracite flames. After about another ten minutes, I rose up into the air and changed to Night Fury, glided right over the top of the building, and fired

downward in a thick stream, causing an explosion and leaving a gaping hole through at least 4 floors about 20 feet wide. Once that was over I turned and rose up higher.

As I cleared the short hills surrounding the building, I changed once again, turning the bright white of a Wind Fury and rising up higher. But as I began to move over the landscape, I stalled and nearly fell out of the sky. The view I had of the land surrounding me was not a welcome sight, though it was beautiful.

Off to the southwest, there was a series of mountains, multiple chains split by wide valleys covered in thick pine forest. Everywhere I looked, there was more forest, or an occasional small lake breaking the monotony. But what made me stop for a moment was one mountain, set a little off from the rest, and rising high above it all. Oh, dear Lord, help me, I thought. I'm a lot further from home than I thought.

The high mountain was easily recognizable, with steep, snow-covered slopes and a tall, prominent sharp peak. If I was correct, it also rose to over 20,000 feet high. At this point the terrain was unmistakable: thick taiga forest stretching in every direction untouched, massive snowcapped mountains, and besides the people I had just left behind, not a human soul in sight for miles around. I was stuck in the one state where the square miles outnumbered the people living in it: the massive peak was known as Denali, and it was located in the heart of one of the largest parks in the largest state in the United States: Alaska.

### 35. Chapter 35: Reconciliation

\*\*A/N-Only one chapter left to go, and it will be up tomorrow! \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chapter 35</p>

#### Reconciliation

"Hello, 911, what is your emergency?" "I-I'm calling to report a kidnapping." "Okay, what is your name?" "Denise Carlton." "Did you say Carlton? Like the name of that dragon boy?" Denise sighed, already too worked up to deal with these sorts of questions. "Yes, he's the one who was kidnapped. I'm his mother." "Oh, I'm so sorry. Can you tell us when he went missing?"

As Denise filed the report with the police, telling them what they believed happened, Astrid, Hiccup, and Toothless sat outside in the grass, while Hawken's dog Panda tried unsuccessfully to rouse Toothless into playing. "I hope they can find him," Astrid said. "If he ends up being gone for good I think it would tear everything apart." "You know him, though," Hiccup said. "Even if the police can't find him, he'll figure out a way to get back. He's got enough going for him." He looked over at Toothless, who was laying sullenly in the grass, tail twitching in anxiety. "I mean, if a dragon can't find their way back home, no one can. He'll show up again." They sat in silence for a little while longer, then Astrid turned back to Hiccup. "What do you think would happen if he did disappear forever, though?" She looked behind her at the portal. "We certainly wouldn't

have reason to come here very often again. Would the portal close?" Hiccup shrugged and laid his head in his hands. "I'm not sure. I would hope not, since I know Hawken wanted us to someday be able to roam freely around this world too. But it would be too strange, I think, being here when he wasn't." He shook his head. "Let's not think about such morbid topics though."

A couple of minutes later, Denise came back out of the house. "Well, what did they say?" Hiccup asked urgently. "They said they'd try to find any leads, but weâ€|. we don't have much to go off of. It'll take a day or two to get anything going though, but usually things are pretty organized." She looked back into the house. "I need to call Sam." She went back into the house. Astrid sighed and looked back at Hiccup. "Unless the person they're looking for is no longer even in this world," she said. Hiccup shot her a look. "The Terrors didn't see anyone come through the portal, so he's still on this earth." He looked at the house. "I'm going to tell her that if she finds anything, to come and get us, but we can't do anything more here, unfortunately." Astrid nodded, and while Hiccup went inside, her and Toothless went back to the cove. When Hiccup joined them, they flew to the village to let everyone know of the news.

\* \* \*

><p>Wind Furies may be fast, and I mean supersonic fast in short bursts, but traveling beyond the speed of sound is exhausting, and I could only go so fast for a few minutes at a time. The rest was pure gliding and regular-speed flying. Alaska is huge as well, so I barely made it past the peak of Denali (and up that high, even in late June it's freezing) before I had to really slow down and start looking for a place to rest. It didn't help that it was nearly midnight, and the sun was still up high in the sky, another wonderful aspect of Alaskan seasons. But for once, my tendency to read a variety of books paid off for me. I had a series based off of national park mysteries, and one was about Denali National Park. A little ways to the south of the massive mountain, there was supposed to be a small outpost ranger station, somewhere where I might be able to find some refuge for the night. Spending it out in the Alaskan wilds was a daunting idea, for even though I could stay dragon, I wasn't into the idea of coming against wolves or bears, or any of the other predators that made the northern forests their home. I landed on the mountain slopes, and after a couple minutes of heavy breathing and trying to slow my heart down, I took off again.<p>

A few minutes and about 12 mountains later, I finally spotted a runway. In a park as big and remote as Denali is, roadways through the park aren't exactly feasible, so nearly all traffic is either by foot or by air. Good thing too, as that makes spotting small buildings from a distance a whole lot easier. I spilled air and began to descend toward the asphalt clearing. By pure luck, there happened to be a few people outside, doing who knows what, but that meant it was a whole lot easier to get their attention. It's hard to miss a large, white dragon coming in for a landing. As I coasted down to try and land on the runway, I saw the people begin to point and stare, though I couldn't hear what they were saying. As I got closer, a couple ran inside, only to quickly return with more people and, alarmingly, guns as well.

Once I was within a few hundred feet I began to pick up bits and pieces of conversation. "Is that what I think—" "Could be dangerous—"

"maybe that boy I heard about from-"

I sighed and flared my wings out, putting my feet down to catch my landing, flapped a couple times to slow me downâ€|..and missed my mark completely, landing hard and skidding across the pavement a few feet. I groaned and stood up, releasing my draconic characteristics and turning back to my normal self again breathing heavily from the exertion I had gone through. "Needâ€| to rememberâ€|..never toâ€|..do that again," I panted, and slowly stood up straight, looking toward the crowd in front of me that had gathered. Admittedly, this was Alaska, so "crowd" is a relative term.

One of the rangers stepped hesitantly forward. "Youâ€|.you do speak English, right?" she asked carefully. I gave her the fisheye. "You don't keep up on the news very much, do you?" I asked. "I am from the US, I do speak the common language." "Oh, sorry," the ranger said, a bit taken aback by my statement. "Uh, do you happen to be, uh, H-Hawkâ€|. Hawker.. Hawkins?" I smiled and shook my head. "My no one gets my name right do they? It's Hawken. Yes, I'm the one you heard about in the news. Uh, question from me this time: is there a place I can stay around here for the night? I have a really long trip home, and I am absolutely exhausted." Another ranger stepped forward. "You're from Colorado, right?" I nodded. "Then what are you doing way up here? It's a little early season for vacationers and hikers." "I was brought here against my will. Kidnapped, you could say." "Kidnapped?!" the two rangers who had spoken up said in unison. I nodded. "Said his name was Malin. I don't suppose any of you know him, do you, considering he was working within the boundaries of the park here?" A couple whispers were passed, and the second ranger spoke up again. "You said Malin? That can't be right, because he was working on studying the grizzly bear populations in northern Denali. He kidnapped you?" Before I could answer, another ranger held up his hand. "Let's continue this inside, shall we?" he said. "You certainly look tired, and if your story is in fact true, you'll need to sit down and rest for a while."

We all filed in behind him and entered what looked almost like a lounge room. I was offered a soft chair, which I gladly took, and nearly fell asleep in, and everyone took up places around me. There were about 8 people total in the room not including me. "Okay, first off," the ranger we had followed inside began, "my name is Cody, and I'm the current supervisor for this station here. I worked with Malin for a while up north before I was promoted and moved here. Please, tell me what happened."

I recounted my story, talking about what I had actually seen in the building up there, and led up to my landing at the station. "So, the research outpost went down seven floors?" a ranger named Cindy asked. "Last time I was there, there were only two floors, one with offices and the other the lab room for the population tests. We never gave funding for anything larger. It wasn't all that big either." "Well, then he modified it somehow, and to quite an extent," I said, "or it was a different building altogether. I did see another, smaller building off to the east a little ways, maybe that was the research station." Cindy nodded. "That would make a lot more sense, certainly since the research station was brown in color when I was there a few months ago." I shrugged. "Well, in any case, I do apologize, but the building they had me in is no longer extant. But if it's any consolation there wasn't a single thing related to animal studies in there, everything was centered around researching me!"

Cody nodded. "Would it be alright if we contacted the police bureau and let them know that you're up here?" I raised an eyebrow, but nodded. "I think I was gone for more than a day, so I'm certain someone's looking for me already. I know my family is probably worried sick and I certainly don't have any way of reaching them. My phone didn't come along for the trip." Cody smiled. "Alright, just asking. Yes or no would have sufficed." He looked to another man nearby, who nodded and walked out of the room through another door. Cody looked back at me. "Now, you need to just stay here and rest up. It sounds like you're planning on heading home on your own, and while I'm not sure if that's the safest option I guess that's the best we can do right now. In the meantime, I need-"

"Denali runway come in! We require assistance!" the two way on Cody's belt yammered. I immediately recognized the voice too. Cody grabbed the two way and responded. "Malin, is that you?" "Yeah, we need some help at the facility. There was a, uh, an accident, and we need assistance getting back to your station." Cody raised an eyebrow and looked at me, but responded as if there was nothing going on. "Alright, we'll send a couple of choppers up your way, that's the best we can get out before tomorrow. We'll discuss what to do about the accident when you get here." He looked at the ranger who had first spoken when I had arrived. "Julie, get a couple choppers running and send them up to the northern research facility pronto. And make sure to bring Malin here on the first trip, as we have a few things to discuss with him. Oh, and mind the wind coming off the peak at this time of night, it's a little unpredictable." Julie nodded and headed out right away. Cody looked back at me and nodded. "We'll get things straightened out before the night is up, don't worry."

\* \* \*

><p>BBBBRRRRIIIINNNNGGG! BBBBRRRRIIIINNNNNNGGGGG!</p>

Denise rushed to the phone and picked it up. "Hello?" "Is this Denise Carlton?" "Yes, it is." "This is the police department. We received a call last night, and we found your son." Denise was silent for a moment, then spoke again into the phone. "Well, wh-where is he?" "The caller said that he was in a ranger station in Alaska."

"ALASKA!" Denise yelled, her heart racing again. "Please ma'am, calm down. They said he found his way to the ranger station in Denali national park. Don't worry, he's perfectly safe." Of course, Denise was going to worry anyways, as this was her son they were talking about, and Holly had heard her yell and was now blasting off question after question, which didn't help. "Are they going to bring him back here?" she asked. "I'm afraid not. We asked that, and they said they didn't have anything that would make the full trip. They said thatâ€|. well, he's planning on making his way home on his own." This didn't really sit well with Denise, but there wasn't much that could be done. Her son was currently thousands of miles away, and she couldn't exactly call him on his cell phone. She had tried that, and found the phone ringing off his desk in his room. "Is-is there anything else?" "We don't have any more information yet, other than that they're finding out who took him in the first place as we speak. If anything else comes up, we will be sure to call you."

Denise ended the phone call not long after, and then spent a couple minutes calming Holly down, and talking to her husband, who had come

home immediately when he had found what happened, and had gone looking around all of northern Colorado that night to find out if there was a possibility Hawken had been taken somewhere close. After making sure everything was settled down at home, Denise started for the door. She turned around after a second thought and grabbed map, then headed out.

Following Hiccup's instructions he had given her the day before, Denise walked through the portal and over to the edge of the cove. There was a rustling behind her in the trees, and she spun around in worry, but calmed down when she saw one of the Terrors fly off in the direction of the village. Carefully, she made her way down into the cove, and sat on a makeshift bench Hiccup had fashioned, waiting.

Sure enough, only a few minutes later, Denise heard the sound of wings and looked up to see Toothless and Thorn gliding in to land. As they did, Astrid and Hiccup dismounted and came running over to Denise.

"What's the news?" Hiccup asked hurriedly, stumbling over a small rock as he slowed down (even after a month, he still wasn't fully used to having feeling in his left foot). Denise waited until they were both near, and had sat down, then laid the map down and opened it up. "They said he was in Alaska," she said, pointing to the outline of the huge state, then at a smaller outline that marked Denali National Park. "He was at a ranger station here. I don't know if Hawken showed you, but our house would be here." She moved her finger down to a spot in the northern part of Colorado. Hiccup's and Astrid's eyes both widened. "Soâ€|..he's a long way from home, huh?" Hiccup said quietly. "Even for a full dragon, a straight flight of that distance would take a couple of days," Astrid added. "He'll have to stop and rest at some point too. Hawken isn't completely draconic, so he's probably not going to be home for at least a few days." Denise nodded. "It'll take longer, though. A straight flight wouldn't be easy, not for someone who's never seen the land. He'll take an easier path, maybe along the roads or the coast," she said, tracing her finger along the Pacific coast, then inland from there, "then head a path home. We've only been to that coast once, so he'll likely only know the one path in from there."

Hiccup sat back for a minute, not feeling as bad as he had when he heard Hawken was missing, but feeling deflated nonetheless. Then his eyes brightened a little bit. "Would it be possible for us to watch for him during the day?" he asked. Denise gave him a strange look. "You're not going to try and find him yourselves, are you?" she asked. "You don't know our world very well yet, and Hawken wouldn't stand for that, you know, especially if someone found you." Astrid shook her head, catching what Hiccup meant. "No, we just meant stay in the yard, watch for him if he comes back during the day." "Oh." Denise thought for a minute. "Iâ€|I guess. It might be good, since it would give Holly something to focus on besides her missing brother. She's not all that high in spirits right now. Just make sure no one sees you." She looked over at Toothless, who she was sure would come along as well, knowing how close he was to her son now as well. "Especially don't let anyone see him."

\* \* \*

><p>BBRRRBRRBRRBBBRRRRRBBBBRRRRBBBBRRR!</p>

I had been sitting, dozing off in the chair in the ranger's "living room" for a number of hours when I heard the sound of the helicopter returning outside. It had taken quite a while to get up there and back. "They're here," I said loudly, but didn't leave my seat, way too tired to move. After Malin was dealt with, I'd be heading off to find somewhere I could actually sleep, too. I knew also that Malin would be brought in here anyways, so there wasn't reason for me to move yet anyway. Cody rushed past me and headed outside. As the chopper landed and the sound of the rotors died away, I fine-tuned my hearing and caught the conversation outside, listening in. Julie spoke first.

"There seemed to have been a bit of a fire of some sort a few miles from the research station," I heard her say. "It seems the fire ran through a couple of the power lines heading to the research building, and everything went out over there." "So, that was the emergency? Is there a way to fix it soon?" I heard Cody ask. "Not with the equipment we have up there," Malin's voice sounded now. "It took out the poles and everything, along with a spare generator we had in the area." "Well," Cody began again, "let's get inside and we'll straighten this out." I heard their footsteps start to head my way. "Julie, we'll take care of these people, make sure you get some rest and we'll send Jill out in a few hours to see if anyone else needs help getting back." A door opened, and footsteps came down the hall, and by this point I noticed the rangers who were not busy had gathered in the doorways, leaning against them as if blocking the exits. Malin stepped through the hallway door and into the room, still facing away from me. "Y'know, I hope this doesn't affect the research process too much, we were reallyâ€|. Malin trailed off as he looked at the gathering rangers in the other doorways. "Okay, what's going on here?" he asked, turning away from me and back toward Cody. "Turn around," he said. Malin did.

"So, can we start singing, 'It's a Small World After All' now?" I asked nonchalantly. Malin uttered a string of words I won't repeat, and attempted to sprint back out the door. He didn't make it past Cody. "Well, I guess that explains who was telling the truth," Cody said as he grabbed Malin by the arms and pushed him into a chair opposite from me. The other rangers filled in the room and shut the doors as Cody and Cindy stood guard on either side of Malin. "I think it's time for a long explanation, before you get carted off," Cody said, pulling out a pair of handcuffs.

Malin tried to escape again once more, but after another failure, the story he was forced to lay out for us gave more than enough evidence to land him and about 15 other people in jail for life, on accounts of kidnapping, stealing of federal funds, what amounted to plans for terrorism of sorts, and so on. What he told basically summed up what he had so graciously spilled out for me when I was locked up: that he was planning on harnessing my (sadly for him non-reproducible) abilities and use them to take on the US military forces, to revolutionize our government, followed by dozens more, in order to lay out his own view of a proper world nation. Somehow this all came off to me as the ranting of your typical movie villain, and naturally everyone unanimously agreed something was fundamentally wrong with Malin.

Whatever the case with him, he and his cohorts were restrained until a plane could be called up to send them to a city where a proper

court hearing could be held, and I, in the meantime, retired to a spare room to rest up for the trip I was planning ahead of me. To state it plainly, if I was going to get home in a decent amount of time, I would have to be smart about it. I didn't know the land, and so I was going to have to follow the coast of the Pacific until I found a road that would lead me inland and back to Colorado. It was going to be a long, tiring trip, so I beg your pardon if I was really cranky when I returned.

### 36. Chapter 36: Heading Home

#### Chapter 36

##### Heading Home

One problem with being somewhere far north is that there's never any real indication of when you're supposed to get up, what with the sun being up all night during summer. Add to that sleeping somewhere where no one knew you well enough to risk trying to wake you up, and time tends to sweep past until it's very late. That's why I ended up sleeping until nearly 10:00 in the morning, and still woke up a little groggy and cranky, but more than ready to leave. Cindy called ahead to notify my family I was heading out, and she also gave me a map with a couple of locations marked where there were people willing to take me in for a night along the way. Shortly thereafter, I finally waved goodbye, smirking as I watched Malin get carted off to a helicopter so he could be taken to the "nearest" facility, and took off, Wind Fury style.

Talk about a huge land! Alaska is nearly as wide across as half the continental United States put together, and Denali is nearly at the center. It took me nearly three hours to reach the coast travelling at the speed of sound, even going in a straight line. Once I did, there still wasn't even the slightest sign of human inhabitance, nothing but rocky fjords and pristine forest along the coastline. Though Alaska is huge, you certainly couldn't deny its rugged beauty.

The rest of the day found me taking the trip far easier, gliding along the fjords, watching as reindeer and bears went about their lives below and seals and even whales played off the coast. That was yet another plus about being able to take a dragon's path home: the so-called bird's-eye view is stunning. Being a dragon also means being able to hunt easily, and though I had never liked fish before, the past few months had found me gaining an increasing taste for it, especially fresh-from-the-ocean fish, and so meals were easy to find, if still unpleasant to prepare, and keep from roasting to ashes.

By nightfall, I began seeing larger towns and coastal settlements, along the coast of British Columbia, and only a little ways further I finally found myself crossing back into US territory, Washington bays and fords coming into view and the characteristic shape of Puget Sound and Seattle along the coast spreading out below me. I banked inland, gliding over rooftops and yards, searching for the sign of a place to stay. The rangers had dealt with the issue the night before, and after a few minutes I spotted it: a small house near the edge of Seattle with a bright ring of lighted traffic cones on the front yard. Gliding down, I landed carefully on the walkway and morphed back to my normal self.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

A few seconds later, the door opened, and in its place stood a young couple, a brunette woman and a tall, blond-haired policeman, still in uniform. "You must be the boy they called us about," the man said, gesturing inside. "Come in, take a seat."

I followed them into the house and into the kitchen, where I took a seat at the table. After all that had transpired, I was glad to be able to sit down, and to a meal that wasn't Pacific salmon. The couple introduced themselves as Rachel and Stephen, or Steve. "We're very sorry to hear about all you went through," Rachel said apologetically "Are you really that, uh, how do I put this: are you that dragon boy we heard about on the news a while ago, from Colorado?" I smiled knowingly and nodded, holding my hand out palm facing down, and watched in amusement as their faces lit up in surprise as grayish scales raced up my arm from my fingertips.

The usual round of curious questions came afterward, but after all the couple was providing me for the night I was happy to answer most of them. We sat down and had a dinner of baked chicken and potatoes, and then I went to sleep on the bed in their guest room, trying to ready myself for the next day.

Indeed, the next day was a great deal more exhausting, as I had to travel down a far more populated coast, and would have to cross the first of multiple mountain ranges, the imposing Sierra Nevada. I was going to try and skirt around the biggest cities to try and keep attention to a minimum, but this is the West coast we're talking about, with California and all of its residents and tourists. As expected, near any developed area, I drew crowds out of their houses and workplaces as I cruised near cities and towns large and small, especially once I crossed into California. By mid-afternoon I had traveled almost as far south as I needed to go, and banked inland, heading out across the arid deserts of inland California, the infamous Mojave. The summer sun was not merciful, and though dragons are relatively immune to extreme temperature swings it wasn't pleasant, so I used the massive thermals rising up off the desert floor to soar up to extreme altitudes, matching some of the lower aircrafts and clouds. Below me, the heat of the desert caused the land to shimmer, and nothing alive was visible, save for a bush or two. Talk about lonely.

Evening came, and with it the heat abated, so I slowly fell to lower altitudes and began to skim over the foothills. The Sierra Nevada loomed high in front of me, promising a very exhilarating flight through valleys and canyons soon to come. However, as I began to enter the mountains, I came to a worrying conclusion: I was not yet anywhere near my next stop, and wouldn't reach it until well after midnight. I wasn't going to last that long, either, having been relying on thermals and gliding most of the day so as not to wear out. Though Furies are fast, they're not machines, and even travelling as the fastest species I wore out eventually. Instead of trying to press on, as I reached the first of the higher peaks I glided down into the valley to search for a relatively safe place to sleep for the night, changing from Wind Fury to Night Fury as light waned.

A shallow overhang was the closest thing I could find before it got

too late, carved into the base of a cliff along the edge of the valley, and overlooking a small pond down below. It wasn't really off the ground at all, but it was somewhat concealed, not noticeable unless you looked right at it. I landed and peered inside, the Night Fury's nocturnal vision aiding me as I made sure I wasn't sharing the hideout with anyone or anything. Satisfied I was the only one, I crept in, sweeping a small pile of leaves in with me as a makeshift bed. I stayed as Night Fury as I curled up, since I didn't want to take any risk of being caught off guard out in the forest by any other animal bigger than my human self. I didn't think there was too much in the way of animals that would mess with a night-going dragon, though, and within 5 minutes, I was asleep.

\* \* \*

><p>AAAAWWWWWWOOOOOOO! AAAAWWWOOOOO! YIP!YIP!YIP!YIP!<p>

Mother Nature has an absolutely horrible sense of humor. I jolted awake as the howls and cries echoed up from lower down in the valley, putting me on edge. I perked my ears up and peered out into the night, my eyes straining to spot anything in the dark recesses of the trees below. Though I was a Night Fury, and therefore had nocturnal vision to rival that of any owl, there was no moon out that night with the clouds rolling in, and so at first I couldn't spot anything. My ears, however, picked up the sound of rustling leaves and fast, paced padding through the forest. Whatever they were, they were getting closer, and having heard howls like that before on documentaries, I had a pretty good idea of what they were too.

There! A group of shadows appeared, sliding out of the trees and darting along the edge of the far side of the pond nearby. They slowed at the water's edge and started to drink.

"Didn't know there were wolves this far south here," I whispered quietly to myself. Quietly, I got up and carefully moved the leaves and twigs at the edge of the overhang into a line across the opening, taking care to pick up the piles and drop them with the least amount of sound as possible. Nonetheless, I managed to crack a twig here and there, and caught the wolves' attention. As their heads swung my way, I lowered myself to the ground and backed further into the overhang, opening my mouth and laying down a layer of liquid fuel on the leaves and branches, the same substance Nightmares produced in order to combust themselves. Then, I froze.

RRRRR!RRRRRRRRRRRR!

The wolves weren't being very quiet as they neared my hiding spot, not making any use of the sparse cover as they climbed the hill. It wouldn't have really mattered, though, as I watched them all the way up, my luminescent green eyes the only thing to give me away. They fanned out and circled the hole, growling and sniffing the air, trying to figure out what I was. At this point there was no doubting they saw me, as they were only about 20 feet away, and even as dark as it was, if I could now see them as if it were daylight, they could at least make me out under the ledge. I hissed lowly and bared my teeth, the hiss forming into a deep growl as I picked myself up off the ground. It worked, the growl and my size keeping them wary and at bay, but not for long. Soon, the lead wolf advanced forward, snarling. Out of the corner of my eye I spotted another one racing up

from the side, hoping to catch me by surprise. Instead I flared my wings, breathed in, andâ€|. .

RRROOOOOOOOOAAAAARRRRRR !

A Night Fury yelling at full blast is nowhere near as impressive as a Thunderdrum's, but the screeching roar still shook the area, shaking rocks loose from the hillside and reverberating down the valley, echoing for miles. The wolf pack shrank back, edging down the hill a ways and not knowing what to make of my act. However, they hadn't seen me attack or do anything seriously defensive, and so began to advance forward again.

This wasn't a surprise to me, as the year had been dry in the area, and not much prey was to be had, so these wolves were likely to try anything. I gave another ear-shattering shriek as a warning, but they weren't deterred. I bared my teeth and finally went to the last resort, releasing a stream of white-hot fire and aiming it at the line of fuel across the opening. Thanks to the Nightmare fuel, it burst into flames and cut off the entire opening with 6-foot high flames. It wouldn't last long, with nothing but leaves to burn and the liquid fuel only lasting a few seconds, but it had the intended effect. The wolves began yelping and snarling at the flames, not exactly afraid of it but plenty smart not to try and get close with the waves of heat radiating out. I waited until they had backed far enough away, then burst through the fire, trails of flames and embers following me in great clouds and scattering the pack even more. I turned around to make sure I wasn't starting a forest fire (it had been dry that spring, like I said earlier), and once sure the fire was dying out, I lifted upward and skimmed across the valley, leaving the bewildered wolf pack behind to figure out what they had just dealt with. A conversation with Toothless came to mind as I searched for another, safer spot for the night: while dragons were the top predators in their world, and with intelligence to match ours, wolves were formidable rivals even there. If a pack managed to wound a dragon, taking out a wing or other part used for flight, sooner or later the dragon would empty of fire, and it would be no more dangerous than an angry bear, another animal that occasionally falls to wolf packs.

Eventually, I found another, higher-up ledge on a cliff further to the northeast, and settled there. This time, the only thing that could reach me would be birds, and they were a bit more wary of larger flying reptiles. I don't know how the pack would have reacted to another encounter had I been stuck near the valley floor again, but whatever the case, I didn't hear or see them for the rest of the night.

\* \* \*

><p>Did you know that one of the worst places for a dragon to try and fly over is Las Vegas? Not only is it still in the middle of the Mojave desert, but flying over that tourist trap is ever so annoyingly attention-getting. When I saw the city appear in front of me as I cleared the foothills on the other side of the Sierras the next morning, two things happened: first, I realized I had strayed a bit and was way too far south and needed to veer northward again. Second, after a couple minutes of approaching the northern end of the city, a news helicopter began following me across the Nevada desert. My nerves were too thin for me to just outpace them, so once I was

past the edges of the city, I turned to face the chopper and gave a warning roar, and a piercing glare. The news people got the message: I wasn't in the mood to play their games. At all.<p>

I made it to central Utah by mid-afternoon, having crossed over another mountain range and passing over Arches National Monument, and as evening came, I was in the heart of the Rocky Mountains. I was grateful that this third night would be the last I'd be spending away from home, and thankfully, it was spent with a very kind family in a town near the center of the Rockies called Glenwood Springs. The two younger, boisterous boys were a bit of a headache, especially being fans of HTTYD and recognizing my favorite dragon form, but I'll live. After all, I have to deal with Holly every day, so I can survive anyone else. As they say, beggars can't be choosy.

\* \* \*

><p>Astrid, Hiccup, and Toothless had had a very restless four nights, each of them camping out in Hawken's back yard and trying to stay awake as long as possible in case Hawken happened to return in the middle of the night. Denise had been getting phone calls every day giving her reports of where Hawken was staying that night, and the night before no one had really slept when the call came in saying he hadn't made a stop anywhere. They had ended up taking shifts, one staying awake or staying at the house to watch while the other two slept or went to get food or supplies from the village, so as not to be a burden to Denise or Sam. Astrid had been doing a little better, what with getting along with Holly and finding things to do with her, keeping both their minds off the missing person.<p>

But a week after Hawken had actually disappeared, and after four nights of sleeping in shifts, the stress was taking its toll and by noon on the next day, only Toothless was awake, and even then only barely, one eye half open and watching the sky somewhat lazily. Holly was inside snoozing, having spent the night before trying to keep from getting depressed again by substituting Hiccup for Hawken in her teasing, and both of the Vikings were laying sprawled out on a blanket and tarp in the grass, right next to each other and deep in dreamland.

Hiccup had been dreaming about running through the forest, looking for his friends out in the woods in an odd game of hide-and-seek, when suddenly, the earth began trembling! Okay, so actually it was Toothless practically rolling him and Astrid off the blanket, but it had the same effect: the two lovebirds woke up rather suddenly.

"Toothless, bud, w-what's going on?" Hiccup groaned. Toothless "barked" and looked off toward the mountains in the west, or what you could see past the houses. Hiccup wasn't paying attention, still trying to rub the sleep out of his eyes, but Astrid glanced that way, squinted, and then gasped. "What?" Hiccup said groggily. She nudged him onto his feet and pointed. In the distance, just coming down over the last of the foothills, was a small slightly off-white dot. At that distance it could have been taken for a large bird or maybe a small airplane, but the distance-to-size ratio suggested it couldn't be the former. Plus, not many small planes move very fast, and the dot was moving at a speed that was phenomenal: in just the minute or so they were watching, it had quickly crossed nearly a quarter of the distance. Astrid's eyes widened, and she jumped up and bolted for the

house. Pulling the sliding door open and ignoring the dogs barking at the sudden intrusion, she screamed, "HE'S HERE!"

\* \* \*

><p>I shot like a bullet down over the foothills of the Front Range, staying up relatively high so as not to damage anything below (I was moving at supersonic speeds, and the shock wave I was producing would have blown out windows like tissue paper if I was any lower) and blasted across the plains. As my house finally came into view, I flared my wings to reduce speeds and began dropping down toward the neighborhood and aiming for my yard. To my surprise, Hiccup, Astrid and Toothless were standing there in my back yard next to my mom and sister. As I slowed down to prepare to land, I never got the chance to touch ground on my own, as Toothless jumped up and tackled me into the grass, covering my face in dragon spit.<p>

"AUGH! Toothless! Toothless stop, please! Get off me already!" I squirmed as Toothless licked my face over and over, not caring if he was pinning me down to do so. I pushed him off and shrank back to my normal self, only to get pushed over by Toothless again.

::Who took you? Did you take care of them? If not I'll get rid of them myself if they ever show up here again!::: Toothless continued to ramble on, still licking me as I glared at the four laughing people in front of me. "Yes, yes, just stand there and laugh at me getting drowned in slobber," I griped. "Glad you think it's funny." "Alright, Toothless get off," Hiccup said. ::What? Oh, fine,::: Toothless grumbled as he stepped away, retreating over near Hiccup. I stood up and burnt the spit off my face, then turned to see everyone. Holly ran up to me and hugged me, then Astrid sauntered up next to me.

WHAM!

"Owwww! What was that for?!" I yelled as I rubbed my arm where she punched me. For a girl nearly as thin as I was, she had some serious strength. I mean, even to the dragon boy here she has a mean punch. "That was for scaring all of us half to death," she snapped, moving a strand of hair out of her eyes. "What?!" I snapped back. "You think it was my fault I got kidnapped? Oh, don't you dare think of kissing—" I was cut off as Astrid joined Holly in giving me a killer hug.

"And that's for getting back here safely," she said when she let go. "And to clarify, I only kiss Hiccup." She gestured to him, and I finally had an excuse to smile as Hiccup turned red.

Next, my mom walked up to me, tears in her eyes as she hugged me almost as fiercely as Holly and Astrid had (though Holly still hadn't let go; even when happy to see me she's a pain). "I'm glad you made it home safely," she said as she stood back a touch. "We were very worried when we got a call two nights ago that you hadn't shown up anywhere. Did anything happen to you?" I laughed. "Yeah, I got to sleep in the woods. Come on, I'm half dragon, it takes a lot to keep me down. I mean, not even a power-hungry psycho-maniac was able to keep me locked up, you think a night in the forest will be that bad?" I stepped back as my mom finished her hug fully.

"One thing, though," I said as we all turned to go inside and sit

down. "What?" they all asked. I smiled. "Let's try and keep the adventures and excitement to a minimum for at least a week or two, alright?" Everyone laughed in agreement as we stepped inside. A few minutes later my dad made it home, and we all sat down for a day of just relaxation and reunion, retelling what I had experienced, and just laughing and telling jokes and playing games the rest of the night.

It was good to be back home.

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><p><strong>AN- And there it is, the end of Book 1! Hope everyone enjoyed reading it, and stay with me as we move on to the next installment of the series: Expanding Horizons. New adventures, new dangers, and more happenings that will reverberate with us throughout the rest of the series. Say tuned, the Two Worlds Collide series is far from over!\*\*

### 37. Author's Note

\*\*Hello again all! \*\*

\*\*It's been over a year and a half since this book was last updated with its final chapter. Today is a very important day: I (and similarly the main character of the series) and turning 21, and in celebration I am returning to this book to post this now letting everyone know: the final book approaches! Yes, the 6-installment Two Worlds Collide series is nearly at its climax, and it's been a fun ride!\*\*

\*\*This book, as of my writing this note, has acquired 39 followers, 58 favorites, and 47 reviews! Current total view count is also at exactly 19,000! By far the highest of any of my books, and still gaining views almost every day!\*\*

\*\*As a reminder to everyone who has followed this story, this was the first of a series, and the other books to check out are as follows, in order:\*\*

\*\*1. Two Worlds Collide\*\*

\*\*2. Expanding Horizons\*\*

\*\*3. Reaches of Reality\*\*

\*\*4. Time's Revelation\*\*

\*\*5. Inheritance Past\*\*

\*\*Two Worlds Collide: The Book of Dragons\*\*

\*\*And now, be on the lookout for Book 6: Echad, We Are One. It will be the longest of my writings, with a lot of factors coming into play from characters introduced in nearly every single book.\*\*

\*\*I would also like to thank everyone personally who has contributed to the following this book has received:\*\*

\*\*A fanfiction  
reviewer\*\*

\*\*AlexFalk\*\*

\*\*AmeliaRoseOswald\*\*

\*\*BestFrEnemies\*\*

\*\*Chardora\*\*

\*\*DracoDraconis55\*\*

\*\*Fairytailllover\*\*

\*\*FenrirFenrisSonOfLoki\*\*

\*\*HAMMERFALL314\*\*

\*\*Harmony the  
Hedgehog\*\*

\*\*Kaladonija\*\*

\*\*MarionetteThePuppet\*\*

\*\*RaidenStephano Feli Ita  
Vargas\*\*

\*\*Readerfever\*\*

\*\*Redder45\*\*

\*\*RuaTheGreat\*\*

\*\*Saber The F4U  
Corsair\*\*

\*\*Saphirabrightscales\*\*

\*\*ShadowDraconian\*\*

\*\*The Crimson Commando\*\*

\*\*The Dreamer Eternal\*\*

\*\*The Orion Project\*\*

\*\*UpstartBuckle09\*\*

\*\*Weirdo For  
Life\*\*

\*\*WhollyUnwind\*\*

\*\*bean89032\*\*

\*\*carrycherry61\*\*

\*\*cyclone13\*\*

\*\*drcheese123\*\*  
\*\*forestshazow\*\*  
\*\*gogotore1\*\*  
\*\*imy123\*\*  
\*\*mark251002\*\*  
\*\*moonligh\*\*  
\*\*moovielover48\*\*  
\*\*redhoodfan\*\*  
\*\*silverwolvesarecool\*\*  
\*\*tzu753\*\*  
\*\*1Micil\*\*  
\*\*BlackFox993\*\*  
\*\*Bruised tulips\*\*  
\*\*Demonic girl111\*\*  
\*\*Herecomesdifferent\*\*  
\*\*Junkmail  
Hoffers\*\*  
\*\*Keyblade132\*\*  
\*\*Madhuntr\*\*  
\*\*Norwesterner\*\*  
\*\*Pietersielie\*\*  
\*\*Pokemaster22\*\*  
\*\*Princess Rose Lily\*\*  
\*\*Regina'sMusic\*\*  
\*\*Rider Of The Night Fury\*\*  
\*\*Sapphire-Eyed Valekdros\*\*  
\*\*Spartan322\*\*  
\*\*The Night's Wrath\*\*  
\*\*The Story Of Your Life\*\*  
\*\*TreePyro\*\*

\*\*Tyrannosaurus  
Ross\*\*

\*\*bolt0101\*\*

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Ranger\*\*

\*\*Ivangenev1992\*\*

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\*\*MittenstheFox\*\*

\*\*Boomboxbiggot\*\*

\*\*the  
doombuster\*\*

\*\*Reviewer\*\*

\*\*Blobby\*\*

\*\*Fanficlover\*\*

\*\*Zero\*\*

\*\*GBJackson\*\*

\*\*Fanfic reviewer\*\*

\*\*overwatch\*\*

\*\*gunrunner\*\*

\*\*And the unnamed Guest Reviewers who also contributed. Hope to see many of you following along with the next installment! Look for the prologue to Echad, We Are One sometime within the next two weeks!\*\*

End  
file.